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*DRAMA IN*  
*SANSKRIT LITERATURE*



# DRAMA IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

ADYA RANGACHARYA  
(Formerly R. V. JAGIRDAR )



BOMBAY  
POPULAR PRAKASHAN

© ADYA RANGACHARYA

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THREE REASONS have made me write this book.

1. I am a student and ardent admirer of *Sanskrit* literature.
2. In my own language and province I have been a dramatist of some reputation and have fifteen years' experience of producing and acting plays.
3. After 'Sanskrit Drama,' that readable and authoritative volume of the late Dr. A. B. Keith, there has been no work dealing generally with the history of *Sanskrit* drama.

It would be presumptuous to disregard as trifling or insignificant the contribution which the Western and our critics have made to the study of the *Sanskrit* Drama. But their pioneering enthusiasm should not obscure us to the fact that dramatic criticism in *Sanskrit* has so far proceeded on such orthodox lines that the last seventy or eighty years appear to have added but little to our understanding of the greatness of the classical tradition or the significance of individual plays either as works of art or as stages of development of the dramatic art. The fact that the *Sanskrit* plays possess a poetic splendour all their own seems to have weighed so heavily on the minds of the critics that invariably the more significant fact that they are plays first and poetry next has either been ignored or forgotten. We would be paying but a poor compliment to our dramatists if we merely treated them as purveyors of the epic or traditional stories with some embellishments. That they had something definite of their own to convey through rearrangements or modifications of the age-old stories should therefore be assumed as a preliminary to an appreciation of the special contribution of each single dramatist, and the critic, if he is insightful enough, will find in the end that his assumptions will be amply substantiated and proved. The same has to be said about what little has been done in evolving a consistent account of the growth and development of *Sanskrit* Drama. Dependence on scanty internal evidence has led to unending controversy. It has never even been suspected that a close examination of the growth of dramatic technique may throw a good deal of light on the course of

the development of the pre-classical and classical drama. In the main I have approached the subject from these points of view and I am sure some of my conclusions will offend the orthodox critic. Yet I do not consider the present work as a study, either complete or satisfactory. It is my intention to complete it by another volume dealing with the stage, the production etc., in ancient and mediaeval India and to bring the story of the Indian Stage upto the modern times.

In writing the following chapters I have depended mostly on *Sanskrit* originals. Dealing mainly with the history of the art of drama I have not troubled myself with the vexed question of the dates of the various dramatists. Nevertheless, the order in which I have dealt with the individual dramatists represents, in my view, the chronological order of those dramatists.

I must add one word about the quotations from original *Sanskrit*. I have preferred the Roman script since that reaches both Indian and foreign readers.

Some chapters of this book were written as early as ten years ago. Some of them appeared in journals to all of which I am thankful.

To my friends, Prof. V. M. Inamdar and Sjt. H. S. Patil goes the entire credit of seeing the book from the preparation of the manuscript to the preparation of the index and through the press. But for their enthusiasm the publication would not have been as desirable as it certainly claims to be.

I must thank all those readers, friends and actor-collaborators of mine who never suspected that I would learn in their company, if not at their cost. To my students in the college also my thanks are due for what I have learnt while teaching them *Sanskrit* poetry, *Sanskrit* rhetorics and *Sanskrit* drama.

My heartiest thanks are due to one of my friends and sympathisers but for whose timely and liberal help the book could never have been published.

January 1947  
Dharwar

R. V. JAGIRDAR

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

ALMOST IN the wake of the publication of the first edition I had to sever my connection with the Education Department. In a country and at a time in which even academic institutions had fewer facilities for original studies, cessation of academic service made such work almost impossible.

For the convenience of general Indian readers the verses quoted in the text in roman script are printed at the end of the book in Devanāgarī script. ( Appendix D )

Three chapters on Sanskrit stage and production, one on the comparison of Rasa theory with Western theory of Drama have been newly written and added.

In spite of the change in my name and ( the absence of any ) academic status, my interest in drama and stage has continued both as a dramatist and a producer. My earlier intention, however, to complete this study of Sanskrit Drama by a detailed volume dealing with the stage, the production etc. in ancient and mediaeval India has still to remain unfulfilled.

I must particularly thank the publisher but for whose enthusiasm this second edition would not have seen the light of the day.

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## CONTENTS

<i>Preface to the First Edition</i>	v
<i>Preface to the Second Edition</i>	vii
<i>List of Works with their Abbreviations</i>	xi
Growth of Sanskrit Literature	1
II Form of Sanskrit Literature	9
III Origin of Sanskrit Drama (Traditional)	18
IV Who is Bharata ?	25
V Religion and Drama	30
VI Dumb Show and Dramatic Representation	35
VII Origin of Sanskrit Drama (Conclusion)	40
VIII The Early Stages of Development	43
IX Plot Development in Sanskrit Plays	50
X The <i>Vidūṣaka</i>	63
XI The Stage and the Production of Earlier Sanskrit Plays (I)	72
XII The Stage and the Production of Sanskrit Plays (II)	78
XIII The Stage and Production of Sanskrit Plays (Traditional)	86
XIV Early Plays (Bhāṣa)	90
XV Main Tendencies	96
XVI Kālidāsa	106
XVII The <i>Mṛcchakaṭika</i> of Śūdraka	119
XVIII The Doctrinaire Drama	128
XIX The Doctrinaire Drama (contd.)	141

XX	The Plays of King śri Harṣa	155
XXI	A Revival	165
XXII	The New Touch	173
XXIII	Epics and Sanskrit Drama	193
XXIV	The End	200
	<i>Appendix A</i> Cārudatta and Mṛchhakaṭika	205
	<i>Appendix B</i> Bhāsa's Plays	209
	<i>Appendix C</i> A Note on Bharata's Theatre-House	213
	<i>Appendix D</i> Sanskrit Verses in Devanāgari script	217
	<i>Index</i>	227

## WORKS REFERRED TO WITH THEIR ABBREVIATIONS

R. V.	: R̄gveda.
S. V.	: Sāmaveda.
Y. V.	: Yajurveda.
A. V.	: Ātharvaṇaveda.
Mbh.	: Mahābhārata.
Rām.	: Rāmāyaṇa.
N. S.	: Nāṭya Śāstra ( Kāshī Sk. Series ).
D. R.	: Daśarūpakaṁ.
S. D.	: Sāhityadarpaṇa.
M. S.	: Manusmṛti.
C. H. I.	: Cambridge History of India.
G. E. I.	: Great Epics of India.
Bib. Drama.	: Bibliography of Sanskrit Drama ( Columbia University : Indo-Iranian Series, Vol. III ).
Skt. Drama.	: The Sanskrit Drama by late Professor A. B. Keith.
Brit. Drama.	: British Drama by A. Nicolls.
Ind. Theat.	: The Indian Theatre by E. P. Horowitz.

### BHĀSA'S PLAYS :

Prat.	: Pratimā.
Abhi.	: Abhiṣekanāṭaka.
Bāl.	: Bālacakita.
S. V.	: Svapnavāsavadatta.
P. Y.	: Pratijñā Yaugandharāyaṇa
P. R.	: Pañcarātra.
M. V.	: Madhyamavyāyoga.
D. V.	: Dūtavākyā.
D. G.	: Dūtaghaṭotkaca.
K. B.	: Karṇabhāra.
U. B.	: Īrubhaṅga.
Cār.	: Cārudatta.
Avi.	: Avimāraka.

## KĀLIDĀSA'S PLAYS :

A. Śāk.	: Abhijñānaśākuntalam.
Vik.	: Vikramorvaśiyam.
Mālav.	: Mālavikāgnimitram.

## ŚŪDRAKA

Mṛchh.	: Mṛchhakatikam
--------	-----------------

## BHAVABHUTI'S PLAYS :

M. V. C.	: Mahāviracaritam
M. M.	: Mālati Mādhavam.
U. R.	: Uttararāmacaritam.

## SRI HARŚA'S PLAYS :

P. D.	: Priyadarśikā.
Nāg.	: Nāgānandam.
Rat.	: Ratnāvalī.

## OTHER PLAYS :

M. R.	: Mudrārākṣasam of Viśākhadatta.
V. S.	: Veṇīśamhāram of Bhattanārāyaṇa.
K. M.	: Kundamālā.
A. R.	: Anargha-Rāghava.
Pras. R.	: Prasanna-Rāghava.
Prab. C.	: Prabodha Candrodaya.
K. M.	: Karpūra Mañjari
B. B.	: Bālabhārata.
Sub. D.	: Subhadrā-Dhanañjaya.

## CHAPTER I

### GROWTH OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE

THE SCOPE of the following pages is extremely limited. An attempt will be made to survey that part of Sanskrit Literature which pertains to Drama in the popular sense of that word. The survey would be many-sided : Sanskrit Drama in theory, in practice, in its relations to contemporary social conditions and its place in Literature in general and so on. Thus a study of Sanskrit Literature itself, though in outlines, would be essential to start with. That study forms the background for the present work. Sanskrit Drama is one of the chief aspects of Sanskrit Literature.

To enable the readers to follow our thesis it will have to be explained at the outset as to what is meant by Literature. For our purposes Literature means two things. (1) Literature is life—Life understood as a vital force always working through and in relation to its surroundings. In this sense Literature is far wider in its scope as well as in its form. In trees and in flowers budding in spring or fading in autumn, in rivers flowing and in seas surging, in the rustling of wind and in the singing of birds, equally as in the behaviour of Man is embedded Life's Literature. Life expressed, Life interpreted, Life asserted and Life made living—all this is Literature. To a man of routine life, however, such a literature is denied in its freshness. (2) Thus arises the second meaning of Literature, viz., the work of Poets. A poet is one who has seen Life as expression, accommodation and assimilation and who holds out for others, like a mirror, this vision of his. It is this mirror held, this attempt to convey one's vision to others, that constitutes literature.

Sanskrit Literature is no exception to these general observations. From the early days when hymns were chanted by the Vedic seers to the rising sun in the east, to the shining fire on the altar, to the thundering clouds above, we find in literary compositions contemporary life and thoughts. Some of the Vedic hymns, especially those sung in honour of the Dawn or of Indra, the wielder of the Thunderbolt, are fine specimens of fact and fancy. The Vedic hymns are the earliest known (Sanskrit) Literature. Therein do observation, sympathy and surprise play the most

important part. It would be a reasonable supposition that after a time surprise gave place to speculation, and sympathy to study; while observation grew keener and closer. In the case of Sanskrit Literature at least this seems to be the fact. For, after the Vedic hymns, came the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brāhmaṇas*—one an outflow in speculation and the other an attempt at specialisation. Both, however, are still attempts to understand and interpret Life—life within and life without, the phenomena of living and growing human beings and the equally regular phenomena of seasonal life on the earth and of stellar life in the sky. Whether it is philosophy or ritualism does not matter for our purpose. It is sufficient ( and it is true ) to note that the *Upaniṣads* as well as the *Brāhmaṇas* attempt to systematise the observations of Man and thus try to understand Man and his surroundings.

This process of systematisation culminated at a time known to scholars as the *Sūtra* period. The Sanskrit word *Sūtra* means an aphorism, wherein a mass of details is compressed within a minimum of words. Thus we find *Sūtras* of Philosophy, of Interpretation of Grammar, of Prosody, of Dialectics and so on. How was it possible to codify such vast and varied knowledge in so few words? There is only one intelligent attempt of understanding such a possibility; that is, by admitting the rise of technical words. Technical words are always words given a special power to convey a logically connected series of ideas, mental processes or material phenomena. It is quite likely that by the time of the *Sūtras* there was a big list of such technical words. The process of coining such words was there quite early.<sup>1</sup> Specialisation and technical words go hand in hand. As illustrations of specialisation we have ( 1 ) *Yāska*'s *Nirukta* of the 7th century B. C. which is a work on Etymology; and ( 2 ) the study of *Mīmāṃsā* which, in spite of its etymological sense, is a Science of Interpretation. The recognition of the six *Vedāṅgas* probably synchronised with the attempts at specialisation.<sup>2</sup> So we might conclude, in spite of the unfortunate lack of sufficient data, that what we now understand by scientific or technical study was current in India since soon after the Vedic hymns.

1. Cf. The etymological attempts of the *Brāhmaṇa* texts.

2. Cf. The word *Vedāṅga* means a branch of Vedic study as the prosody, the ritualism, the glossary etc. of the Vedic hymns.

At this stage we come across the peculiar yet perpetual irony of the human mind. The human mind in its freshness is so interested in life and sets to study it; then it is so interested in the study itself that it makes life un-interesting. Specialisation has neither place in nor favour with human life. Human life is ever fresh. Specialisation is ever stale. It is for this reason that small connection indeed is found between scientific study and life, between technical literature and the tedium of life. It should not be supposed that technical study is entirely irrelevant in life. From our present point of view, however, technical study has no place in literature. The Sūtra literature of the 6th century B. C. along with the earlier tendencies it represents, has nothing to convey of the life of the average man and has also no interest for the average man.

Side by side with the Sūtras is to be found another form of literature which, in contrast to the technical, could be termed popular. The material available in this respect too is meagre: nevertheless the little that is known is genuinely illustrative and hence sufficient for the present purpose. The earliest that could be called popular without any hesitation is the epic literature viz. the two epics—the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa. These two works are essentially narrative stories. The authors themselves reveal their intention of letting the narrative to recitation. Thus, the Mbh:—

\* idam śata-sahasram tu  
ślokānām punya-karmanām  
upākhyānaih saha jñeyam  
śrāvayam bhāratam uttamam ( I-i-77 ) (1)

“ Here are 100,000 verses describing meritorious ( i. e. heroic) deeds; together with the legends therein, this work—the Bhārata—is the best to be *listened to*. ”

That these works were mainly intended for the populace is evident from many obvious circumstances. The benefits to the listeners as enumerated are too tempting. The contents too are tempting. Besides the material relevant to the story, could be found all that would appeal to the average mind and intellect. The common place of life is not excluded <sup>3</sup> The style is simple and

\* Quotations are given in Devanagari script in Appendix A

3. Cf. vākyā-jāti-viśeṣāś ca loka-yātrā-kramāś ca yaḥ “ (Herein is to be found the interesting observation as well as the ways of the world) ” Mbh. I-i-94.

direct—direct in the sense of being less literary or artificial and more free or colloquial.

That the epics form a landmark in the growth of Sanskrit Literature is but obvious. The amount of work done by scholars in this respect is eloquent enough. The point relevant here is different. We are concerned not with what the epics achieved but with what they encouraged. With no amount of exaggeration it might be said that the *Mahābhārata* first and the *Rāmāyaṇa* next introduced a new vogue into Sanskrit Literature. What we now speak of as Literary Art in general could be said to have begun in India with the writing of the epics. What is interesting now and must have been no less than a miracle in those days is turning literature into an art. What with the Vedic sentiments growing dim, what with the mysteries invested and ascribed thereto by the *Brāhmaṇas*, what with the esoteric speculation of the *Upaniṣads* and what with the stifling style of the *Sūtras*, men must have welcomed, applauded, encouraged and been enraptured by literature like the epics which would flow in easy narration, would ebb with emotion and charm with music ! The epics are such, describing the heroic deeds, the thrilling adventures and the noble efforts of warrior-princes. What would be more pleasing and more comfortable to a people living in mystic horror of powerful surroundings than Man depicted as a successful hero against all evil and inconvenient forces ? More pleasing still as the manner in which it was done, viz. by means of pithy, intelligible verses known as *ślokas*.

That literature could be so stimulating and refreshing and fascinating was a new experience which was felt in all the first flush of enthusiasm. The post-epic works that have been retained for us through tradition are mostly works where literature is an art; wherein the purpose is more to enthrall and to enrapture than to teach or to speculate. We shall find along this tradition some masters of letters who have successfully emulated the authors of the epics in blending Art with Life, Pleasure with Intelligence, Beauty with Morality, and Ecstasy with Divinity. Thinkers have thought, teachers have taught, and poets have sung not in the school-books of logic or rhyme but in artistic forms modelled on the epic. The one notable feature of the preserved post-epic literature is life through enjoyment and appreciation of Beauty or

Harmony or whatever one would like to call the convenient and comfortable adjustment of man to his surroundings.

It should not be supposed that all this is a phantom raised by our own enthusiasm. Appreciation was quite early admitted as a necessary faculty in study and culture. This statement could be well illustrated by a reference to Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra*. It matters little indeed to us whether Bharata is really the author, whether the *Nāṭya-śāstra* belongs to the post-Christian or the pre-Christian era. We are concerned not with the thoughts of Bharata (or of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*) but with the tendencies he (or it) represents. Bharata's treatment of this question presupposes that the subject had been under discussion a long time before; secondly, Bharata quotes the opinions of his predecessors. For this reason we feel justified in accepting the validity of Bharata's remarks with reference to the post-epic literary phenomena. Charm and appreciation, says Bharata, form the key-note of a literary piece. Nothing exists or excels without *rasa* (na hi rasādṛte kaścid arthaḥ pravartate, p. 71). That *rasa* includes among others the idea of charm and appreciation foremost is apparent from the analysis (N. S. chap. VI), that follows the above statement.

(i) In the first place, *rasa* is explained in general terms as follows :—

rasa iti kah padārthaḥ ? atra ucyate ;  
 āsvādyatvāt. Katham āsvādyo rasah ? atra ucyate ;  
 Yathā hi nānā-vyañjana-saṁskṛtam annam bhuñjānā  
 rasān āsvādayanti sumanasah puruṣāḥ harṣādīnś  
 cāpi adhigacchanti tathā nānābhāva-abhinaya-  
 vyāñjitān vāg-aṅgasattvopetān sthāyi-bhāvān  
 āsvādayanti sumanasah prekṣakāḥ. (2)

“ I shall tell you what *rasa* is and how it is enjoyed (i. e. experienced). In a meal consisting of various tastes and savours the diners are pleased with one feeling of pleasure arising from different causes. Likewise the audience would feel rapture through experience conveyed by emotions and movements. ”

(ii) Secondly the details of *rasa* experience are analysed as follows :—

A percept or a feeling depends on a stimulus. The stimulus is known as the *vibhāva*. Response to a stimulus is two-fold, voluntary

and involuntary; the involuntary or the immediate is physical or perceptible and is known as the *anubhāva*; the voluntary or the mental is a reaction and is known as the *vyabhicāribhāva*. The involuntary or the *anubhāva* has a physical cause ( i. e. is due to a direct contact ) and a mental effect as in the case of perspiring through fear or of being thrilled by pleasant suddenness etc ; the voluntary or the *vyabhicāribhāva* has a mental cause and physical effect as in the case of being tired or of feeling relaxed etc. A stimulus with this two fold response means a complete experience or appreciation. To feel the bodily thrill and to be exhilarated at heart is the complete experience of the beautiful in Nature; unless we do that we do not feel at home ( to speak in prose fashion ) or we do not lose ourselves ( to speak the same poetically ) in the beauty surrounding us. This state of losing oneself is known to Bharata as the *sthāyi-bhāva* (i. e. a state of unperturbed peace.) and he says that the *vibhāva*, the *anubhāva* and the *vyabhicāribhāva* merge into harmony or the *sthāyi-bhāva*. In other words when Bharata says that *rasa* is the *sine qua non* of a literary work he only means that the work would serve as a stimulus by experiencing which the reader or the spectator is appreciatively charmed into a complete surrender. This view of Bharata was taken up later on by the rhetorician Ānandavardhana who maintains that a *kāvya* or literary piece could be appreciated only by a *sahṛdaya*; the word " *sahṛdaya* " he explains as follows :—

yeṣām kāvya-abhyāsa-anuśīlana-vaśād  
viśadībhūte mano-mukure varṇāṇīyatānmayībhavana-  
yogyatā te hṛdayasamvādabhājaḥ sahṛdayāḥ. (3)

A *sahṛdaya* is thus one whose mind and tastes are refined and who is sympathetic to the extent of losing himself in ( i.e. identifying with ) the things experienced.

We are anticipating, however. All this discussion only shows that a time was when literary works were solely judged with reference to charm and appreciation. And such a time, it is urged here, began with the epics.

The epics were important from another point of view too. They formed a charming recitation ; and recitation would be still more easy, convenient and charming if it were undertaken by those who were either gifted or trained for it. The popularity of the epics opened a great chance for such a class of reciters. In the epics

themselves we have evidence to show that the work of training reciters came into existence soon after, if not simultaneously. The chief narrator in the present version of the *Mbh.* is Sauti, the son or descendant of Sūta. The epic *Rāmāyaṇa* was sung by Kuśīlavas trained by the author—the sage Vālmīki—himself. Sūta, however, seems to be the earliest of a trained class of reciters. The Sūta was probably a professional. In the *Mbh.* at the opening of the *Āstika Parvan*. Sauti, says :—

itihāsam imam viprāḥ purāṇam paricakṣate  
kr̥ṣṇa-dvāipāyana-proktam naimiṣāranyakavāsiṣu  
pūrvam pracoditaḥ Sūtaḥ pitā me Lomaharṣaṇaḥ  
tasmād aham upaśrutya pravakṣyāmi yathātatham. (4)

“ This legend is supposed to be very old; it was narrated by Vyāsa to the residents of the Naimiṣa forest; my father Lomaharṣaṇa was first trained to recite it, and I shall narrate it just as I have learnt it from my father. ” ( I-xiii-6-8 ),

This Sūta, however, should be distinguished from the Māgadha, a bard, who was also a reciter.<sup>4</sup> Though both were professional reciters the Māgadha was a kind of “ a Court bard ” who recited mainly, if not only, the genealogy and the greatness of the king under whom he served. The Sūta was a paurāṇika i. e. one who knew the whole traditional lore and was also a wandering minstrel. The style of the epics encouraged the growth and importance of the Sūta class; and that class in its turn perpetuated the popularity of the epics.

Lastly, the epics fulfilled another function. By their fervour and popularity they not only directed but also restricted positively the course of subsequent literature to one, uniform channel. Most of the extant later Sanskrit works are modelled on the epics. It was only an accident that the bulk of the *Mbh.* prevented it from being a source of emulation while the *Rāmāyaṇa*, written as it was round one hero and with no complications or digressions, formed the chief model; but if the *Rāmāyaṇa* was the source of emulation the *Mahābhārata* was as often the source of inspiration. In all this the later writers unfortunately miscalculated. At the time they wrote, the Sanskrit of the epics was further and further being removed from the contemporary form it had assumed in the meanwhile. A direct appeal to the reader

4. Cf. in this connexion C. H. I. Vol. I, p. 130, 131, 257 & 297

was now out of question. So we find in all these later works—known as the classical Sanskrit Literature—a lack of the natural ease and charm and flow of the epics; secondly, a deliberate attempt to make up for that loss by artificial means like extravagance and ostentation.

In spite of this incidental divergence, Classical Sanskrit Literature remained as near the epic models as possible. As time went on the Sūta class disappeared and in its place are to be found the court poets combining in themselves the rôles of both the Sūta and the Māgadha. The story of the Sūta and the style of the Māgadha are now to be found together. It is not intended here to convey that the whole of the Classical Sanskrit Literature is the work of Court-poets. The petty princelings that came into existence after the disruption of the Mauryan Empire (2nd century B.C.) had pleasure and satisfaction in listening to the unheard of and impracticable glories ascribed to themselves by a poet who would further attempt to trace the origin of his patron back to any of the epic heroes. Rivalry was one of the causes of the spread of such a class of literature. An accident of earlier vanity was accepted as a tradition in the later days till, in spite of the fact that Sanskrit was unpopular, i.e. unintelligible to the average reader, Sanskrit works were written in the epic style even as late as the 11th century A.D. ! (leave alone the later pedants). Indulgently nourished like a child of rich parents and denied the fresh air and the vigorous exercise in popular appreciation this class of Sanskrit Literature died an inevitable death. It died so miserable and wretched that no sane attempt has ever since been made to revive it.

---

## CHAPTER II

### FORM OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE

IN THE LAST chapter, we made a rapid survey of Sanskrit Literature in its broad relations to the tendencies of contemporary life. A natural expression of Life in the early Vedic days, Sanskrit literature plumed itself into an art, an expression of joy and beauty, and then, for various reasons, art decayed into artificiality, and died at last the inevitable death of an uncongenial, unnatural element.

To simplify the historical sketch no mention was made there of another factor, that is, the form of the Sanskrit Literature. By 'form' is meant the material aspect or what would be roughly distinguished as prose and poetry. The earliest Vedic hymns had a material form, divided into verses of two to four lines of an equal number of syllables. The language of the Vedic hymns was peculiar in one respect; it had a tone accent. This accent had a grammatical value inasmuch as it determined the position and the relation of the word in the sentence, and sometimes even the meaning of the word and so on. As a result, superficially, the chanting of the Vedic hymns had a musical effect.

After the four Vedas the accents with their original significance are missed. Further, the form of the Brahmanic and the Upaniṣadic Literature differs on the whole from that of the hymns. It is *not metrical*. Probably, the discursive nature of their contents compelled the authors of the Brāhmaṇas and of the majority of the Upaniṣads to write in a prose style, while the descriptive nature of the Vedic hymns gave freer scope for metrical composition. The literature of the Black Yajurveda is the only earlier literature written in a prose style.<sup>1</sup> We have, as already mentioned, Yāska's Nirukta—a scientific work on Etymology—written in a prose style. The question of prose or poetry may not, after all, have been related to the discursive or the descriptive nature of the work concerned. That the question is, however, important for the present purpose will be seen presently.

Writing was not known before the 8th century B. C.<sup>2</sup> Even

1. C. H. I. Vol. I, p. 114.

2. Oxford History of India, pp. 27 and 136.

after it was introduced the difficulties involved, for want of other materials, were enough to dissuade even an enthusiast. So literature in those days must naturally have passed on orally. Even this oral " publication " entailed much labour and more difficulties. Common experience shows that poetry, with its fixed length and its equal number of syllables and its rhyme, is easier to be memorised than prose, which is more fluid. For this reason, the poetic i.e. the metrical style must have found more favour in those days. The only attempt to simplify the study of prose works was made in the Sūtras but its very success scared the average reader away.

Here again the authors of the epics showed a shrewd foresight. With the boldness of a genius they faced the realities and with the skill of an artist they gave them a form. The epic story in itself would have appealed to the readers but by utilising the metrical form for narration that appeal was made stronger and more lasting. Even the metre used was the simplest viz. the anuṣṭubh or the śloka with four feet of eight syllables.<sup>3</sup> The task was made easy both for the reciter and his audience. Thus, in the Mbh. the reciter Vaiśampāyana says :—

- (i) Śrāvyānām uttam cedam. " Most pleasing to listen to " (I-lxii-18). (5)
- (ii) Śrāvyam śruti-sukham caiva. " To be recited and also listened to with pleasure. " (ibid. 52). (6)
- (iii) Vistīryaitat mahad jñānam ṛṣih samkṣipyā cābravīt |  
iṣṭam hi viduśām loke samāsa-vyāsa-dhāraṇam, | (7)  
" This great lore has been narrated by the sage in brevity and at length; what is more convenient to learners than to get knowledge in these two ways "
- (iv) Alainkṛtam śubhaiḥ śabdaiḥ samayair divya-mānuṣaiḥ |  
chandovṛttaiśca vividhair anvitam viduśām priyam (8)  
" Words are charming, situations both human and superhuman, rhymes and metres vary; so it ( i.e. the epic ) will charm the learned. "

A thrilling narration, a simple metre, and musical variations. What wonder then that the epics should form the ideal of all future writers ! Of the two, the Rāmāyaṇa had the further advantage of being short and compact, more systematic and more

3. For a fuller discussion vide G. E. I., Chap. IV.

poetic; for this reason, the Rāmāyaṇa was hailed as the ādi-kāvya or the first literary poem.

As a result of such circumstances poetic style became the vehicle of popular literature. In the early days of the epics it was only convenient to recite and easier to follow. But as time wore down the language of the epics to variations and modifications the advantage of the style diminished; and as writing came more and more into vogue the early advantage of a recitational style lost its force. But in spite of such changes in the language within and in the society without the post-epic poets copied the metrical model of the epics. Longer and more difficult metres were introduced. Narration too lost its simplicity and naturalness, and the poetic style that was once the magician's wand of a popular artist turned into the school-master's rod of a pedant. The music that touched the finer chords of human hearts turned to a drone that sent to sleep some self-centred petty prince or that pampered the pundits into drowsy applause.

It would be bold indeed on our part to insist that the post-epic Sanskrit Literature, blindly following the models, crashed headlong into decadence. Literature, after all, is the production of the poet and the artist. If literature is degraded it only means that it is in the hands of mere pretenders to literary laurels. The form of the epics was retained more because of what it had achieved in its own days than of what it was or would be achieving subsequently. That form had outlived its fresh appeal and its faithful art. The prose attempts of the earlier days culminated in the sūtras developing a technology; thus they lost contemporary popular sympathy and ceased to represent popular life. Likewise, soon enough, the epic style too developed into a science with a technology<sup>4</sup>; and thus restricted it too lost the general sympathy and ceased to represent contemporary social activities and ambitions. Nothing could illustrate this

4. By the 8th century A.D. we come across works, supposedly on Rhetorics or literary criticism. It is a pitiful sight of intelligent writers and thinkers wasting themselves on the details of what a hero must be like in a Kāvya, how the Kāvya should begin and how it should end, what things are to be described therein and in what sequence and such superficial points *ad nauseum*. Though these works do not appear till the 8th century the views therein were probably being formed a long time before.

remark better than a casual observation of the monotonous, the rule-bound form of *kāvya* that repeated itself through different ages and with different poets. We might take any *kāvya*—say the *Buddhacarita* of *Aśvaghoṣa*, one of the earliest of the classical period and compare it with any one of the latest—say the *Jānakīharana* of *Kumāradāsa* of Ceylon; we will find that essentially there is no difference in the form and the treatment—an identical beginning, the same arrangement of (oftentimes the same) ideas, facts and fancies and figures of the same tone and touch and so on! There is nothing like a development; on the other hand, there is a desperate attempt, naturally doomed to failure, to preserve the epic model.

It is relieving, however, to find that imitation is not the only contribution of the post-epic period. Every generation has its own ideas and its own ways of expression. The ideas may be based on or borrowed from those of the previous generation, still they appear new either because the generation is new or because the mode of expression is different. The Vedic seers composed their hymns; their descendants expressed same or similar ideas but in a different style (i. e. a different point of view); in the epic days the same ideas were arranged in a peculiar form and expressed in a fresh style; and similarly, the post-epic period introduced, beside the epic, a literary style of their own where the old, old materials were arranged in a new fashion. It should be further noted that almost all the great Sanskrit writers after the epic have subscribed to this new form, testifying at once to the greatness of their own powers and the freshness of the latest style. That style is the form found in Sanskrit dramas.

Superficially speaking, the form of Sanskrit dramas is not quite new or original. Instead of the purely prose or the purely poetic style of earlier works, these dramas were written partly in prose and partly in verse. Secondly, the purpose of the epic viz., to turn literature into art—a path of roses to charm and appreciation of joy and beauty—this purpose, was carried into the dramas. What is the artistic purpose or effect of a drama? *Bharata*, in his, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, gives a frank reply to this question.

duḥkhārtānām śramārtānām śokārtānām tapasvinām  
viśrāma-jananam loke nāṭyam etad bhaviṣyati ;  
vinoda-jananam kāle nāṭyam etad bhaviṣyati ; (9)

"Drama shall be a comfort, an amusement and a refreshment to all those that are grieved, miserable or weary" (I-111 b, 112 a, 117 a). So does Kalidasa, himself a great dramatist, answer this question.

nātyam bhinna-rucer janasya bahudhā pyekam samārādhanam " (10)

Drama though of various types, is an entertainment common to people of different tastes." ( Mal. I. 4 ).

Bhavabhūti, another great playwright of later days, is still more explicit on this point :

bhūmnā rasānām gahanāḥ prayogāḥ  
sauhārda-hṛdyāni viceṣtitāni  
auddhatyam āyojita-kāmasūtram  
citrāḥ kathā vāci vidagdhatā ca. (11)

" Sentiments are depicted in all their subtlety ; the actions are charming and reasonable; there is sense and dignity; the plot is unusual and the dialogue skilful ( such plays alone are considered good, MM. I-6)". The protestations of Bhavabhūti are echoed by a later writer on dramaturgy viz. Dhanañjaya the author of Daśarūpaka. Drama to him, is no class-room moral lesson :

ānanda-niṣyandiṣu rūpakeṣu  
vyutpatti-mātram phalam alpabuddhiḥ  
yo'piṭihāsādivad āha sā dhuḥ  
tasmai namaḥ svāduparāṇimukhāya (12)

" Dramatic representations are the pure expressions of Joy; the innocent fool who believes that Drama, like the study of Itihāsa and others, improves only the intellectual outlook, has no sense of Beauty or Enjoyment." (D. R. I. 6), Instances might be multiplied to show that enjoyment i. e. charm and appreciation formed the foremost feature of dramas. The idea of charm and appreciation, as explained above, was first put into practice by the authors of the epics

Sanskrit dramas copied the epics in another respect. The outstanding features of the epic style were narration and description. The stories of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa are more human in outlook and treatment compared with the mythology of the Vedic hymns or with the Upaniṣadic discussion. This introduction of life-like incidents and emotions was retained in the dramas in so far as borrowing their plots from or modelling them upon those in the epics. More will be said on this feature in another place.

Here it is mentioned as a sufficient reason to show how classical Sanskrit dramas are indebted to the epics. The indebtedness is so close that when after a time, the *Nātya-śāstra* is written, the author boasts therein of drama in the same tones in which the *Mbh.* boasts of itself. Bharata says :—

na taj jñānam na tacchilpam na sā vidyā na sā kalā  
na sā yoga na tat karma nātye'smin yan na dṛsyate ;  
sarvaśāstrāṇि śilpāni karmāṇि vividhāni ca ;  
veda-vidyētihāsānām ākhyānaparikalpanam ; (13)

“ There is no knowledge, no fine art, no learning, no skill, no yoga and no activity that is not represented in Drama. ( Here are ) all the śāstras, all the fine arts and actions of diverse nature.....In Drama are narrated and represented all the Vedic and all the traditional or legendary lore ” ( I. 114, 112b ; 116b ).<sup>5</sup> Just as Vyāsa wrote the *Mbh.* and trained his disciples to recite it, so did Bharata :

ākhyāpito viditvā'ham nātyavedam pitāmahāt  
putrān adhyāpayam yogyān prayogam cāsya tattvataḥ (14)

“ I learnt this Veda of Dramaturgy from God Brahman and then I taught my sons ( or disciples ) both its theory and its practice ” ( 1. 25 ).

Thus we see that most of the original features of the epic style are borrowed by the Drama literature. That the Drama should also borrow the tendency to claim a hoary tradition and a perfection in the same tones as the epic is eloquent enough. But that is only half the truth ; the other half is more important, more enlightening and also more refreshing—as it reveals some new features into literature for the first time. Though they form the subject of a detailed study later, just one or two of them would be considered here.

The most important and the original feature is the introduction of the *Prākr̄ts*. Those who have a historical knowledge of the linguistic development of Sanskrit might question the originality of this feature. Most of the *Prākr̄ts* were, at one time—probably

5. Cf. the famous line in the *Mbh.*

yad ihasti tad anyatra yan nehasti na tat kvacit

“ What is here is elsewhere, what is not here cannot be found elsewhere.”

after the epics, spoken dialects. To write in a style nearer the spoken one was first attempted by the epics. So why should not one say that even the introduction of the Prākṛts was just a tendency borrowed from the epics ? Why not indeed ? But the difficulty lies in taking the Prākṛt passages of the available plays as genuine specimens of actually spoken dialects. Originality in this respect concerns more with the boldness of placing these dialects side by side with the sacred tongue. The two Sanskrit authorities on Dramaturgy have recognised the importance of this innovation. Thus Bharata :—

nāṭya-yoge tu kartavyam kāvyaṁ bhāṣāsamāśrayam. (15)

“ In a play staged the composition should be based on the local dialects. ” ( XVIII-43 ).

The Daśarūpaka, too, is equally insistent. ( 11-63 )

deśa bhāṣā-kriyā-veṣā-lakṣaṇāḥ syuḥ pravṛttayah  
lokād evādhigamyaitāḥ yathaucityam prayojayet (16)

“ In all the productions dress, action and speech should be taken directly from the Society and should be properly observed.”

It would not be unreasonable, therefore, to believe that the introduction of the Prākṛts was an innovation of the post-epic period.

Another important feature of the Drama literature—a feature which is new and original—is the “humanising” tendency. Though the epics had made literature a source of pleasure and interest to the average readers, their success was due more to the style than to the treatment. The story itself was still fantastic; the characters therein were super-human heroes, semi-divine beings or demons of evil and darkness. This element of “super-naturalism” of the heroic age was retained by the later kāvya works and to an appreciable extent even by the Drama literature. But side by side developed a tendency of turning literature from a mere luxury to a light on life. The ordinary beings with the fun and pain, the ideas and idiosyncrasies, the humours and habits of routine life were utilised by the dramatic artists. Literature was here “democratised”—so to say. No evidence would be more convincing than the mention of prakarana—such was the name of the earliest forms in Dramatic literature. Let Bharata himself explain what a prakarana is ( N. S. XX ) :—

yatra kavirātma-buddhyā vastu ūśīram ca nāṭakam caiva  
 autpattikam prakurute prakaraṇam etad budhair jñeyam (49)  
 vipra-vaṇik-sacivānām purohitāmātya-sārthavāhānām  
 caritam yad anekavidham tad jñeyam prakaraṇam nāma (52)  
 nodāttanāyakakṛtam na divyacaritam na rājasambhogam  
 bāhya-jana-samprayuktam vijñeyam prakaraṇam tajñaiḥ (53)  
 saciva-śreṣṭhi-brāhmaṇa-purohitāmātya-sārthavāhānām  
 gṛhavārtā yatra bhavet. (55) (17)

“ Let the wise people know that a prakaraṇa is an original production of a poet dealing with the varied life-story of Brahmins, tradesmen, ambassadors, purohits, ministers, merchants, etc. No kings, no super-human incidents, no heroes of an exalted type to be found here. Let the wise know that a prakaraṇa deals with the routine (domestic aspects of an ordinary (bāhyajana) human being.” Daśarūpaka, more or less, repeats these ideas (D. R. III 39), and Viśvanātha, too, in his Sāhitya Darpaṇa summarises the same views (S. D. VI 224). All this is sufficient to show that prakaraṇa was a piece built up by the author’s imagination but based on or related to the incidents in the life of an average man; no extraordinary situation, no super-human deeds, no exalted powers. Some Sanskrit prakaraṇas like Śūdraka’s Mṛcchakaṭika or Bhavabhūti’s Mālati-Mādhava may not be all we desire when a play is based on actual social life. What is important is the tendency to bring literature nearer and nearer to everyday life.

We are now in a position to summarise the main tendencies of literary development in Sanskrit. In the Vedic days hymns were sung in honour of baffling super-human elements. The feeling behind and the fervour in these hymns were shared by that primitive society as a whole. The rich fancy of the hymns fascinated many a generation following, with the result that that fancy was studied at one time and emulated at another. But that feeling and that fervour were now neither fresh nor popular; so the study in the Brāhmaṇas and the emulation of the Upaniṣads assumed aristocratic airs and, like any aristocracy, were out of touch with popular life. Aryans as a people were still pushing far and wide over India, their life was still adventurous. That adventurous life was represented in the epics, a glorious life set to enchanting music. The result was so successful that the epics served as literary models for a long time to come, extending

even to the times when the very life of the epic days loomed past and fantastic. The last stage of our survey covers a field where the epic style was not merely modelled upon but modified to an advantage. That is the field of Dramatic literature.

So far the survey reads like one story. But so many objections can be legitimately directed against it. Can the literary development be traced along the lines suggested above? Can it be shown that the Drama literature comes after the epics and *not at all* before? Were there no dramas before the epics? Questions like these will have to be answered throughout the present work. The question that would face us first is that of the origin of Sanskrit Drama. An answer to that question would meet many of the above and similar objections. So to that question of the Sanskrit Drama we shall now turn.

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CHAPTER III  
ORIGIN OF SANSKRIT DRAMA  
(Traditional)

To the Hindu mind everything except God and the world (*samsara*), has a beginning. Moreover, the beginning of anything is supposed to be known as certain only when it is traced to God Himself. So we find the *Natyashastra*—the scientific treatise on Drama and Dramaturgy, traced traditionally to Brahmā, the All-Creator. We may be annoyed at such an irresponsible attitude of facetiously tracing all things to God—we may be annoyed but we cannot complain. In one respect, these ancient Indian scholars (called *rasis* then) have an advantage over the modern Sanskrit scholars. In explaining any phenomenon by tracing it to God the old sages enunciated a theory or an outlook which has been at least silently acquiesced in; while the modern scholars, in tracing any and every feature of Sanskrit Literature to and from the Vedic period, are only raising a dust-storm of doubt and indecision. The traditional account, as will be presently shown, has a style of its own, to understand which one has to interpret.

To Bharata Drama has two beginnings, one in the divine and the other in the mortal world. Moreover, as the treatise deals with *drama on the stage*, the origin of Drama means to him the *first performance of the first drama*. The history of this performance, as described in the opening chapters of the *Natyashastra*, hence deserves a full summary.

In the old, old days, when the inhabitants of Jambūdvīpa lived a life not quite a reputable one (*grāmyadharma-pravṛtte*<sup>1</sup>) when towns flourished along with their quarrels and their jealousies (*kāmalobha-vaśam-gate*) and when luck and lust were rife, Indra and other Gods went in deputation to God Brahmā. The good ways of the old world were discredited. To improve the world and its ways they wanted simpler and pleasanter methods. The number of Śūdras, low-caste people, had increased. A Śūdra had no rightful access to the sacred lore or the Vedas. So the Vedas were now not at all helpful. Why

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1. N. S. I. 9.

should not Brahmā create a fifth Veda that would be accessible to all, irrespective of their caste-distinctions? (Sārva-varṇikam)<sup>2</sup>. Brahmā consented. He made an easy and skilful job of it. With the existing four Vedas as his materials he created the Nāṭya—wherein the text was taken from the Rgveda, the music from the Sāmaveda, the action from the Yajurveda and the rasa from the Atharvan.<sup>3</sup> It was a silent revolution and was acceptable to both the old and the new worlds. This piece, called itihāsa, Indra was asked to produce. Indra, however, pleaded his inability. "Sire, the Gods are not able to understand, execute and express this lore; the Gods are not at all suited for Drama."<sup>4</sup> Thereupon the sage Bharata was entrusted with that task. Bharata soon showed that he deserved this divine compliment. Bharata was a man with a shrewd insight and a practical sense. He had the further advantage of being the father of hundred sons<sup>5</sup> whom he could "coach up" with all paternal rigour. But soon he found out that he had to include some ladies as certain parts were impossible to be played by men.<sup>6</sup> The wise sage did not flinch. On his request Brahmā supplied Apsaras damsels.<sup>7</sup> Then the heavenly musicians, like Nārada and others were assembled. The play to be produced was "The Defeat of the Demons." Naturally, the demons took strong objection to it and were wroth that Brahmā should license such a performance likely to disturb the peace of the citizens. The "open fields" (dhvajamaha)<sup>8</sup> of Indra made it easy for the opponents to attack and prevent the production. In the interests of safety, it was found that a play-house well protected by walls on all sides was essential.<sup>9</sup> Later on, the demons were pacified by Brahmā who explained to them the nature as well as the purpose and functions of Drama. Here are the eloquent words in which Brahmā pleaded the greatness of Drama.

"Why are you so displeased, my demon friends? I have created this Nāṭyaveda so that there would be a better mutual

2. N. S. I-17.

3. *Ibid.* I-17.

4. *Ibid.* I-22.

5. *Ibid.* I-24-41.

6. *Ibid.* I-46.

7. *Ibid.* I. 48-50.

8. *Ibid.* I. 55.

9. *Ibid.* I. 79-80.

understanding ( *karmabhāvānvayāpekṣo* ) between you and the Gods. It is not a piece of propaganda of any one section. The three worlds shall be described here. There is religion for those who are religious minded, love for those that are amorous minded, knowledge for the ignorant, criticism of the learned, a delight to the Gods and a solace to the afflicted. In short, every one will find in Drama just what he needs and what is good for him. It preaches yet delights, it recreates yet it is reasonable, it teaches and yet is broad-minded. Where else could you find reason with recreation, knowledge with attraction, and morality with beauty ? ” <sup>10</sup> The demons must have been men with hearts. They were not only pacified but entirely satisfied.

Chapter II of the N. S. can be passed over in this connection as it merely describes the creation and the details of the *nāṭyavēśma* —or the play-house.<sup>11</sup> In the new play-house Bharata went through all the preliminary ceremonies ( III ). By this time the sage had grown wiser by experience and did not revive “ the Defeat of the Demons.” With his band of actors he waited on Brahmā to receive orders as to which play was to be staged. It was decided to play the “ *samavakāra* ” performance named “ The Nectar Churning ” ( *amṛta-manthana* ).<sup>12</sup> Brahmā was so pleased that he volunteered to introduce the company to God Śiva, and in the presence of the latter a “ *dima* ” performance, by name “ the Burning of the Three Forts ” ( *tripura-dāha* ), was given. God Śiva too commended the actors whom he found promising and, to make the performance better, he undertook the task of personally supervising and introducing dance and music into the show.<sup>13</sup>

Thus does Bharata describe, at length and in rapture, the first dramatic production under his management. This account has mystified many scholars, and many more were justified under the circumstances to dismiss the whole narration as of no-historical value. One is rather surprised to find that these scholars should insist that history ought to have been written, in those earlier days, in the same style as in the modern days,

10. *Ibid.* I. 102-118.

11. For a fuller interpretation of these Chapters see Chapter XX of this work.

12. N. S. IV. 1-4.

13. *Ibid.* IV. 10-15.

With a little more patience and a more accurate analysis it will be seen that Bharata is not as fantastic as he appears to be. Let us only remember that the two first performances are known as "samavakāra" and "dima."

The *samavakāra* is defined<sup>14</sup> as follows :—

devāsurabija kṛtam prakhyātodaṭṭa-nāyakam caiva (18)

"A representation wherein the hero is well known and highly placed, where the story develops on the fight between the Gods and the demons."

What is important from our point of view is the fact that the story *represents a fight*. How was this fight represented on the stage ? The answer to this question is given by Bharat himself in another connexion<sup>15</sup>. Brahmā, the sponsor of Drama was watching a fight between God Kṛṣṇa and two demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha. This fight was fought out by Kṛṣṇa successfully but, strange to say, the success owed itself to Brahmā's directions. The various postures and methods into which the fight developed appealed to Brahmā from an artistic point of view. He was so pleased with the whole show that he immediately set to introduce those postures and methods into his pet fancy viz., the nāṭya or drama. Ultimately he did so in the form of the four vṛttis or styles. What are these vṛttis ? Are they the different methods of representation or are they merely methods under different circumstances ? An analysis of the description of these four vṛttis might help us to answer this question.

(i) First is the Bhāratī vṛtti taken from the Rgveda<sup>16</sup>. It is defined as :—

yā vāk-pradhānā puruṣa-prayojyā  
strī-varjitā sanskrta-vākyā-yuktā  
svanāmadheyair bharataiḥ prayuktā  
sā bhāratī nāma bhavet tu vṛttih<sup>17</sup> (19)

"It consists of mere speeches or recitation and is only played by men. There are to be no ladies at all. The language here is Sanskrit and the actors represent it under their own names."

14. *Ibid.* XX. 66.

15. *Ibid.* XXII. 1-22.

16. *Ibid.* XXII. 24.

17. *Ibid.* XXII. 25.

Here there is no representation, so to say. There no "made-up" rôles as the (supposed) actors are to speak and act under their own names. It is merely recitational, since it is taken from the Rgvedic hymns. And there was no place for ladies at all.

(ii) Next comes the Sātvatī vṛtti.

vā gaṅgābhinayavatī sattvotthāna-vacana-prakaraṇeṣu  
sattvādhiκārayuktā vijñeyā sātvatī vṛttih<sup>18</sup> (20)

" Whenever there is an emotional context, it is accompanied by speech, and acting; if, in addition, there is an abundance of "sattva" it is the Sātvatī vṛtti." What "sattva" is, is explained by Bharata in another place.<sup>19</sup> It is defined as :

avyakta-rūpam sattvam·hi jñeyam bhāvarasāśrayām  
yathāsthāna-rasopetam romāñcāśrādibhir guṇaiḥ. (21)

" It is something subtle and clever on which depends the proper representation of sentiments and feelings " i.e. where there is "acting" as we know it. This vṛtti is apparently taken from the Yajurveda. Here there is recitation as well as acting. As the author speaks of rasa, it is probable that the actors were expected to reveal the supposed effects of the actions by tears etc.

(iii) The third vṛtti is the Kaiśikī.

yā ślakṣṇa-nepathyā-viśeṣa-citrā  
strī-samyutā yā bahu-nṛtta-gītā  
kāmopabhoga-prabhavopacārā  
tām kaiśikīm vṛttim udāharanti.<sup>20</sup> (22)

" There are females in the representation, plenty of music and dance, representation of love-affairs, and lastly there is beautiful 'dressing-up' (Ślakṣṇa-nepathyā-viśeṣa-citrā)." Three points in this definition deserve to be noticed ; (a) presence of actress, (b) dance and music, and (c) impersonation. The first two are closely related to each other; nay, it appears each is essential for the other. For, in the very first chapter, Bharata says :—

kaiśikī ślaṣṇa-nepathyā śringāra-rasa-sambhavā  
aśakyā puruṣaiḥ sādhu prayuktum strījanād ṛte.<sup>21</sup> (23)

18. *Ibid.* XXII. 39.

19. *Ibid.* XXIV 3.

20. *Ibid.* XXII 47.

21. *Ibid.* XXII 57.

“ The Kaiśikī dealing with Love and requiring beautiful dressing is impossible to be staged by men without women. ” I-46.

(iv) The last vṛtti is the Ārabhaṭī.

prastāva-pāta-pluta-langhitāni  
cānyāni māyākṛtam indrajālam  
citrāṇi yuktāni ca yatra nityam  
tam tādṛśīm ārabhaṭīm vadanti ( 24 )

“ Where there are various kings of music, flight, dance, magic etc. represented regularly. ” It should be noted that herein we find some permanent setting ( yatra nityam ) i. e. some sort of stage equipment which would help an honest representation of the various actions.

Without going into further details the four vṛttis might be summarised as under :—

- (i) Bhāratī or purely recitational
- (ii) Sātyatī or recitation and acting
- (iii) Kaiśikī or impersonation with music and dance, and
- (iv) Ārabhaṭī or a true-to-life representation on an equipped stage.

If we remember that during Kṛṣṇa's fight with the demons Brahmā observed the four vṛttis in the same order as mentioned so far and introduced them likewise in the nāṭya, would we not be justified in believing that the four vṛttis are not merely four varieties of representation but a progressive chain in four stages ? Does not the opening account of Bharata, as described above, bear out this belief ? The first performance was a Samavakāra, named “ The Nectar-churning. ” It must have been a pure recitation, a description with probably no device to represent the action.

The second performance was a *dīma* which has been defined as one where the story and the hero are well known.

māyendra-jāla-bahulo bahu-puruṣothāna-bheda-sa-myuktaḥ  
devīsura-rākṣasa-bhūta-yakṣa-nāgāś ca puruṣāḥ syuḥ<sup>22</sup> ( 25 )

“Where there is a great number of male characters and a good deal of make-believe” etc. The “make-believe” is probably the *vāgāṅgābhinaya* i.e. the bodily movements of the Sātvati vṛtti. Without repeating, one thing has to be naturally insisted upon here. The information of the Nāṭyaśāstra may not contain facts, but there is no harm (why, there is more reason) in believing that the work, at the worst, attempts to preserve tradition. In doing this, it describes the different trends in the development of Drama as a representation. Its vocabulary and its technique of description are peculiar to the age. The treatise might be one fairly late. But would that fact alone be a sufficient argument to show that even the tendencies and the tradition preserved therein belong to the latest age?

There is another reason in not disbelieving the above account so hastily. A critical arrangement and a reasonable interpretation of the facts would reveal some interesting points. To those we shall now turn. To render the discussion more intelligible, we shall first mention the three points that emerge from the traditional account.

(i) The credit for the first production of a dramatic representation belongs to one Bharata;

(ii) A consistent attempt has been made throughout to establish a connexion between the nāṭya and the four Vedas; and

(iii) with reference to the Bhārati vṛtti, a probable evolution from dumb show to a dramatic representation has been hinted at.

We shall now consider these points one by one.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHO IS BHARATA ?

Bharata, tradition tells us, is the originator of Drama. He is the Prometheus of the Drama world. Like so many other men of genius of the primitive days, Bharata is placed behind a mist-like halo. The difficulty is not so much in finding out when and where Bharata lived as in acknowledging that he was a real, living person. Bharata is a name well known to the Hindu tradition. In the Vedic days, Bharata was a name of one of the Vedic tribes. Secondly, "Bharata" was supposed to be the name of a king (son of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta) who became the first Emperor (Sārvabhauma). Thirdly, "Bharata" is the name of a sage, the traditional author of the *Nātyaśāstra* (not to be confused with the originator of Dramatic Representation). And lastly in the N. S. itself the word "bharata" is used in the sense of "an actor."

Under these circumstances it is not easy to determine who the Bharata, mentioned in connection with the *Nātyaśāstra*, is. The first two meanings viz., that of "a tribe" and that of "the name of a king" have been entirely ruled out by scholars: as regards the others, scholars have not been able to determine (i) whether Bharata was a mystical sage postulated by the actors themselves, who were called "bharata" and or (ii) whether Bharata was a real person in honour of whose initiative enterprise the actors were called "bharata" s.<sup>1</sup>

That the insistence of scholars is not so well placed will be noticed on a closer examination of the facts. Why should the word "bharata" mean a sage or an actor when neither sense would suit the context? That neither of the meanings suits the context is plain enough. That a mythical sage should write the *Nātyaśāstra* does not appeal to a reasonable mind; that actor or actors should write it does not answer the common sense point of view. Besides, the other meanings of that word do not seem to have

1. cf. "The treatise which goes by his (Fharata's) name is very prolix and may be an amplification of the Bhārata sūtras which are lost. It is to these sūtras or stage directions for the use of bharatas or actors that Bharata owes his imaginary existence" *Ind. Theatre*, p. 30.

been carefully considered. "Bharata", as mentioned above, is the name of a Vedic tribe. In the N. S. itself, the bharatas are referred to collectively, as the sons of Bharata.<sup>2</sup> The literary tradition of the Vedic Aryans is the first reason for such a belief. We know how the authorship of the various Vedic hymns and manḍalas had been ascribed to a family, a clan and so on, but least to one individual.<sup>3</sup> The manḍala VII of the R. V. for example, claims the authorship of the Vaśiṣṭhas i.e. of persons whose family name was the Vaśiṣṭha. Similarly, could not the Bharata or the Nāṭyaśāstra be a family and not an individual? As a matter of fact, in N. S. I are mentioned the hundred sons of Bharata and they are mentioned again in N. S. XXXVI.

On this supposition much of the traditional account could be reasonably explained. At the beginning it was the Bharata family that was responsible for first introducing the art of dramatic representation. As belonging to the Vedic Aryans it was a family of talents and tradition. A time came, however, when the Bharata family lost its prestige and powers and privileges. Nowhere is it so difficult to continue the family traditions as in arts of instinct. Owing to the questionable attitudes and behaviour of Bharata's sons the very art was threatened with destruction.<sup>4</sup> Luckily for Bharata, a king by name Nahuṣa came into power over the divine kingdom. This Nahuṣa patronised Bharata and his sons, and Drama has been firmly established ever since.

The above narration is highly instructive. In the first place, it gives us an idea about a family known as Bharata. This family must have been highly cultured, intelligent and respectable.<sup>5</sup> The fact that other vedic sages cursed the misbehaving sons of Bharata suggests that that was a vedic family<sup>6</sup>. How sincerely pained must have been these other vedic families when they found a family of their own blood and tradition resorting to vulgar ways like dancing and singing—not in honour of the God but to please a vulgar crowd! It is curious that a votary of Dramatic Art should be held in contempt and derision in all climes

2. N. S. I. 26-36, XXXVI, 29.

3. C. H. 9. Vol. I, p. 77.

4. For further details in this connexion see and compare the account in the next chapter.

5. Cf. N. S. I, 22.

6. Cf. *Ibid.* XXXVI, 33-35 and the next Chapter of this work.

and at all times. Is it a universal conspiracy of dull minds against daring, of slovenly self-deception against searching self-knowledge, of instinctive animal spirits against inspired art? If we mention that as late as the XVI century, and in a country where Shakespeare was still living, actors were classed as vagabonds it is only to illustrate a universal tendency. In India, too, from the very early times there is evidence to show a similar state of affairs. In one of the earliest treatises on sociology and politics viz, the Arthaśāstra ascribed to Kauṭilya "singing and dancing" are mentioned among the duties of a Śūdra.<sup>7</sup> Similarly according to the sage Manu a man conversing with another man's wife commits an offence and is liable to a fine; but there is an exception. Any one can talk with an actor's wife and no offence is committed! Actors and their wives are so immoral that the question of their moral sentiments being offended does not arise at all.

naiva cāraṇa-dāreṣu vidhir nātmopajīviṣu  
sajjayanti hi te nāīīr niguḍhāś cārayantī te.<sup>8</sup> (26)

' This law does not refer to the wives of actors or to those that maintain themselves by selling their body. They are procurers and work in secrecy.'<sup>9</sup>

The higher in art, the lower in life—has been the thumb-and-rule dictum of Society; and the Vedic sages had every human reason to be enraged with Bharata and his sons. The consequence could be easily anticipated. The Bharatas should either recant or should forfeit their Vedic prestige and privileges. Luckily for their art the Bharatas were unrepentant. They chose to leave the neighbourhood of their Vedic brethren. They suffered not for this love of their art, for soon enough the royal patronage of Nahuṣa was extended to them. Who is this Nahuṣa? We do not know for certain. What we *do* know is that from the Vedic days he is a sore to the eyes of the Aryans. He is the fiend whom Indra, the beloved hero of the Vedic tribes, attacks.

7. Śūdrasya dvijāti-śuśrūṣā vārtā kāru kuśilava karma ca. Prakaraṇa I, Chap. iii.

8. M. S. VIII, 362.

9. "Cāraṇa" mentioned in this verse—has the highest status in the dramatic world as a singer and a dancer. na hi cāryā vinā kincinnātye hyaṅgam pravartate—without dance, says Bharata the dramatic art cannot exist. N. S. XI 6.

sá nṛtamo nahuṣo armāt-sujātah  
puro abhinat árhan dasyu-hátye. (27)

“ Strong, glorious, manliest, for us he shattered the forts of Nahuṣa, when he slew the Dasyus ”<sup>10</sup>

This Nahuṣa may be an individual or, for all we know, that word may be the name or nickname of a non-Aryan tribe. That the sage Agastya had a feud with Nahuṣa shows that the locality of the latter was somewhere about the Vindhya range of mountains.<sup>11</sup> The Bharata tribe from the Vedic days wandered, now in power, now in obscurity from the Punjab to the Kurukṣetra where their eastward migration was obstructed by the Kurus, and then from Kurukṣetra probably south-west ( through the modern Rajputana ) to Vindhya<sup>12</sup> where it earned the favour of the non-Aryan Nahuṣa.

To return to the word “bharata.” From the foregoing it seems reasonable to believe that the Bharata mentioned in connexion with the Nāṭyaśāstra is the name of a Vedic tribe. But there are passages in the Nāṭyaśāstra where the word “ bharata ” is used not merely in the sense of a family name or in the sense of the family-members ( which naturally came to mean “ actors ” ) but in a still wider significance. “ Now ” says Bharata<sup>13</sup> “ I shall mention the list of bharatas. The scene-setter, the dūṣāka ( Vidūṣka ? ), the musician, the dancer, the stage-manager, the producer, the dresser, the florist, the painter, the washerman, the artisans etc.—these are all bharatas since they supply ( Skt. *toot bhṛ-* ) the various materials required for a performance. ”

A careful perusal of these passages would reveal the fact that a bharata ( or a bhārata XXXV 69 ) is not so such an actor as one of the Managers or workers of the whole show from erecting a stage to the stage-worship just before a play begins. No other

10. R. V. X. 99 vii ( Griffith's translation ). For some other details see the following chapter of this work.

11. For the locality of Agastya and his feud with Nahuṣa, see Mbh. Ādiparvan, Chapter 94, 102, 157 and 207.

12. C. H. I Vol I. p. 188.

13. N. S. XXXV 66-69.

sense could be more suitable since Bharata and his family were not actors but managers and producers.<sup>14</sup>

Thus the word *bharata* in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* refers in the first instance to some members and descendants of a clan or family of that name. This family was the first sponsor and manager of Dramatic Representation. Either the family heritage was lost or the family ceased, for reasons suggested above, to be recognised as a family. After some time *bharata* meant anyone and everyone who sponsored the art and managed or took part in the production.

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14. Note in this connection that in some later plays like the *Venī-saṁhāra* and *Prasanna-Rāghava* the *Sūtradhāra* is addressed as "bharata" in the prologue.

## CHAPTER V

### RELIGION AND DRAMA

The meaning of the word "bharata" as decided in the preceding chapter raises some very inconvenient problems. Those scholars who see in Bharata—the supposed author of the N. S.—only a mythical being easily dismiss the claim of that treatise to any authoritativeness. Hence, according to them, the origin of Dramatic Representation as narrated in the N. S. is a further myth woven round the name of the mythical Bharata. On the other hand, those scholars have their own theory about the origin of Sanskrit Drama—a theory which is free from any mention of Bharata. The origin of Sanskrit Drama, they say, is to be sought in the primitive religious rites. With the progress of research work this theory has been slightly modified. The older theory traces the origin definitely to the Vedic religious performances. "The lack of accurate data precludes our knowing much about the origin of the drama in India but it is probable that it had its beginning in a combination of these hymns in a dramatic and in the religious dances, in which certain pantomimic features came to be conventionalized and stereotyped in later times until we get the classical Sanskrit Drama. This theory is borne out by the fact that in Sanskrit the words for play ( *Nāṭaka* ) and actor ( *naṭa* ) are from the root *naṭ*, which is the *Prākṛt* form of Sanskrit *nṛt*—to dance."<sup>1</sup> As a corollary to this theory arose that of the probable borrowing of the Drama form in India from the Greeks with whom Drama definitely evolved out of the religious rites.<sup>2</sup>

A modified version of the above theory is proposed by Professor A. B. Keith. The phrase "Sanskrit Drama," he insists,

1. Bib. Skt. Drama 1906, Intro. p. 1. Also cf. "The *soma* sacrifice which gave rise to Maṇḍala IX of the R̥gveda is also associated with the oldest prahasanas. They were boisterous farces, rough and gruff like the rumbling and grumbling thunderstorm." *The Ind. Theatre*, op. cit. p. 173, footnote.

"The earliest specimens of Bhāṇas in Sanskrit literature are monologues of a ruined gambler R. V. X. 34 and of *Drunken Indra*" *ibid.*, p. 175 footnote.

2. Brit. Drama, p. 15.

should be understood only in the sense of a conscious representation on an equipped stage. From this point of view, to quote the learned scholar at length, "when we leave out of account the enigmatic dialogues of the R̄gveda we can see that the Vedic ritual contained within itself the germs of drama, *as is the case with practically every form of primitive worship*. The ritual did not consist merely of the singing of songs or recitations in honour to the Gods; it involved a complex round of ceremonies in some of which there was undoubtedly present the element of dramatic representation, i. e., the performances of the rites assumed for the time being personalities others than their own."<sup>3</sup> "On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that it was through the use of the epic recitations that the latent possibilities of drama were evoked and the literary form created."<sup>4</sup> On these views the writer concludes that Sanskrit Drama originated with the Kṛṣṇa legends during the second century B. C.<sup>5</sup>

All this would tempt one to believe that the origin of Sanskrit Drama ultimately goes back to religious performances, Vedic or epic. The views of these profound scholars cannot be easily dismissed—not even on the ground that as foreigners they do not always have first-hand knowledge and experience of Hindu tradition and mentality. The attempt to connect Sanskrit Drama with some or other aspect of the Vedic life or literature is not quite foreign in its origin. Even Bharata, as explained in the last chapter, mentions that the N. S. was created as the fifth Veda; that the text was taken from R. V., the music from the S. V., the action from the Y. V. and the rasa from the A. V. Secondly in connection with the rise of the four *vṛttis* (NS. XX) the fight of Kṛṣṇa with the demons Madhu and Kaitabha is mentioned as the source. Thus on authorities Indian and European, it appears as if the question of the origin of Sanskrit Drama is settled once for all. It would have been, were certain doubts removed by the proposed vedic or epic religious origin. In the first place, the mere mention of the N. S. as the fifth Veda or of the fact that the elements of drama were taken out of the four vedas is of no importance in itself. It has been the age-long tendency of the Hindu mind to trace back everything to the

3. Skt. Drama, p. 23. Italics ours.

4. *Ibid.* p. 27.

5. *Ibid.* p. 45.

Vedas. Just as a Hindu king would be satisfied to learn that the blood in his veins has flown direct from a vedic personage so the average Hindu has satisfaction to know that the beliefs and actions of his are exactly those mentioned in the Vedas. Every new school of thought in India has striven to claim and establish for itself the sanction of the vedic texts. So a statement of the kind under question is more a tribute to the sanctity and hold of the Vedas than a reference to a fact.

The Western scholars are on another plane. The facts mentioned by them are usually unquestionable, but oftentimes the conclusion reached by them would not accord with the facts. Though such latter cases are very few indeed, the origin of Sanskrit Drama is one of them; though best-equipped to know the facts it is most natural for these scholars to ignore the feelings behind them. Thus a connection between religious performances and dramatic representation is a probability to them not because there are all the stronger reasons for it in India, but that such has been the case in civilisations more intimately connected with their own. In Greece, for example, " both comedy and tragedy took their rise from religious ceremonial.... From a common chant the ceremonial soon developed into a primitive *duologue* between a leader and the chorus. The song became elaborated; it developed narrative elements and soon reached a stage in which the *duologue* told in primitive wise some story of the deity."<sup>6</sup> Similar circumstances obtained even in England. " The very Mass itself is an effort in this direction. The whole of this service with its accompanying ritual is a symbolic representation of the most arresting episodes in the life of Christ, and it is but natural that the clergy should have attempted to make it even more outwardly symbolic, as the knowledge of Latin among ordinary people passed further and further into the background. "<sup>7</sup>

Such authoritative remarks show us the reasonableness of the connexion between Religion and Drama. But the difficulty in the case of India is the different state and the different course of her religion. The days of Greece were the days of democracy; while in the theory of Christianity every member of that

6. Brit. Drama, P. 15.

7. *Ibid.* P. 20.

religion had a kind of natural and equal status. In both these cases religion and religious ceremonies involved a free mixing on a large scale of all the followers. But in India, it has been different from the very beginning. In religion as well as in social life, both in theory and in practice, there has been an assertive superiority (and a graded segregation) of the learned over the ignorant, of the ruler over the ruled, of the Aryans over the non-Aryans and later still of the Brahmins over the so-called lower castes. Religious performances were rarely communal in the sense of a social gathering; they were monopoly of Brahmins at first and of a priest-class later; and others were practically barred from an active participation. The Vedic hymns were declared "untouchable" to any except Brahmins or Priests. As a result these hymns became the property of pedantic scholars interested, more than anything, in hair-splitting interpretations. There was nothing popular about such a development. The ignorant and the lower castes played no part in social or cultural life. And Drama, we are told, originated for such persons and purposes.

na veda-vyavahāro'yam samārāvyam śūdra-jātiṣu  
tasmāt sṛjāparama vedam pañcamam sārvarnikam.<sup>8</sup> (28)

"These Vedic texts (or practices are not to be heard by (i.e. are not accessible to) the Śūdras, create a new and a fifth Veda accessible to all the castes."

In answer to this prayer of the Gods, Brahmā created Drama. It is interesting to note that everything connected with Drama is associated with lower castes. It so happened, the N. S. tells us, that the sons of Bharata became too arrogant on account of their dramatic art. "You shall lose your art since you are so arrogant and ill-mannered. You shall lose the Brahmin culture and shall take to the ways of the Śūdras. We hereby degrade you to the Śūdras' status. Your descendants shall be perpetually born into the Śūdra caste."<sup>9</sup> Not only the Art and advocates but even the first patron of Drama was an anti-Vedic if not a non-Aryan King. King Nahuṣa whom we know from the early Vedic

8. N. S. I-12.

9. N. S. XXXVI, 34-37

S. L—3

days<sup>10</sup> and who figures even in the epic literature<sup>11</sup> is spoken of as the first patron of drama in the mortal world.<sup>12</sup> His very name 'na-hut' (non-sacrificer) speaks of anti-Vedic tendencies and his quarrels with the Gods and the Brahmins are handed down in legendary lore.

From the foregoing discussions it seems likely that Sanskrit Drama has least to do with religion or religious rites; that it is the work of people treated as anti-Vedic, if not as non-Aryan, fiends, and that its origins are to be sought in the interests of the lower castes and its patron in a king—a non-Aryan adventure.

Before hastening to any conclusion from the above deductions, we shall deal with a point which is also likely to suggest a popular, non-religious origin of Sanskrit Drama. That point concerns itself with dumb shows.

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10. See *Vedic Index* under "Nahuṣa."

11. M. B. H. III 183.

12. N. S. XXXVI, 48 ff.

## CHAPTER VI

### DUMB SHOW AND DRAMATIC REPRESENTATION

Drama, to Bharata, means a representation by means of speeches and actions. Mere imitation, it seems, is not admitted by Bharata as drama unless it is followed by words and actions ; for, he speaks of drama in these words :

evam budhaḥ param bhāvam sośmīti manasā smaran  
vāg-aṅga-gati-līlabhiśceṣṭābhiśca samācaret. (XXXV-14). (29)

“ Where by means of gestures, physical and verbal, a clever actor identifies himself with the person and the situation he represents. ”

With these views of his, Bharata can never be expected to subscribe to the view that drama originated in a puppet or a pantomime show. No doubt, we can believe the existence in ancient India of such shows. Even in the modern days the Indian villagers have retained the puppet shows, probably in the same form in which they must have existed then. Thus, we read in the *Mahābhārata* :

yathā dārumayīm yoṣām naraḥ sthira-samāhitāḥ  
iṅgayatyāṅgam aṅgāni tathā rājann imāḥ prajāḥ<sup>1</sup> (30)

“ Just as a man, without moving himself moves the wooden dolls, so, Oh King, does the Lord with each and every being. ”

Further we have the view of some scholars who hold that the *Sūtradhāra* or the stage-manager in Sanskrit plays is an evidence of earlier puppet shows ( Skt. *sūtra*, a thread ; hence *Sūtradhāra* means one who holds the thread or the agent behind the puppet shows ). Prof. Keith seems to recognise such a stage in the evolution of Sanskrit Drama. “ We seem in fact ”<sup>2</sup> says he “ to have in the *Mahābhāṣya* evidence of a stage in which all the elements of a drama were present ; we have acting in dumb show, if not with words also. ” Lastly, Bharata himself may be said to suggest an origin from such dumb shows when, as already described, he traces the four *vṛttis* of a drama to a fight between Kṛṣṇa and the demons. Thus it would appear

1. Quoted by Madhva in his *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, II, i. 24.

2. Skt. Drama, p. 36.

that later dramatic representation originated, as likely as not, from puppet and dumb shows or from recitational shows based on them.

There are, however, obvious miscalculations in such a hypothesis. We are not quite so sure if the puppet shows were a regular amusement. We have no reference in the two Sanskrit authorities on dramaturgy, the N. S. and the D. R.—to the puppet shows, nor is there any indication thereof either. On the other hand it might be argued—and not unreasonably—that the puppet shows were merely the substitute of the populace for the dramatic luxury of the intellectuals. Even Bharata's account of the four *vṛttis* from recitation to representation, might not be referring to Vedic recitations or to God-and-demon fights. Lastly the significance of the word *Sūtradhāra* seems to have been missed. If the *Sūtradhāra* were doll-dancer of the popular puppet shows his name would most likely have descended to us in *Prākṛt* or some other non-Sanskrit form. In contrast to that of the word *naṭī* (see Chap. VIII below) the form of the word "*Sūtradhāra*" is Sanskrit. There are some indications in earlier literature which show that the word "*Sūtradhāra*" was coined for purposes quite different. In the first book of the *Mahābhārata*, King Janamejaya is about to perform a sacrifice. The sacrificial ground had to be prepared. In that context we read :

sthāpatir buddhisampanno vāstu-vidyā-visāradah  
ityabhravīt sūtradhārah sūto paurāṇikas tada. <sup>3</sup> (31)

"Then the *Sūta* Paurāṇika who was an expert on land and building, the *sūtradhāra* said thus."

The Paurāṇika *Sūta* is here said to be an expert on land and sculpture and along with this he is called a *sūtradhāra*. Why? The next line gives sufficient clue to the answers.

yasmin deśe ca kāle ca māpaneyam pravartitam

"The time and the place where the measurements were to be taken."

It seems that the *Sūta* was a man who used to measure out the grounds for sacrificial purposes. For this work of an expert he was called a *śilpāgamavettā*. (Cf. the commentary on the above verse.) That an expert on "Śilpa—sculpture" was called a

3. Chap. 51, verse 15.

Sūtradhāra could be said with greater justification on the authority of some other reference as the one from Act II of Mudrā-Rākṣasa. At the time of Candragupta's entry into the palace all the Sūtradhāras of the capital were commanded by Cāṇakya to decorate the streets as far as the palace gates. The more we read the word "Sūtradhāra" in this context the more are we convinced that a Sūtradhāra was more than a carpenter and had something to do with land and building. It was on account of this work that he was called a Sūtradhāra i. e., one who holds out a thread. He took the measurements of the ground by means of a thread. And if we are to believe it, Bharata says the same thing when he describes that a ground for an auditorium and a stage has to be set apart. We have already described how, owing to the obstruction of the demons a nāṭyaveśma, i. e., a play-house was found an essential pre-requisite to Bharata, the Producer. The ground had to be measured out; the process is described to be very delicate and dangerous, so an expert had to be called in. This was the Sūta, already referred to in the Mbh. as the Sūtradhāra.

puṣya-nakṣatra yoge tu śuklam sūtram prasārayet (32)

"A white piece of thread should be stretched out at (the auspicious time of) the conjunction of pausya."<sup>4</sup>

This is one of the reasons why the Sūtradhāra enters at the very opening of a play. In the passage from the Mbh. quoted above he is also called a "Sthāpati"—one who arranges the ground plot. Probably on this analogy the prologue in early plays is called a "Sthāpanā." The Sūta is the Sūtradhāra; the work of the "Sthāpati" is the "Sthāpanā."

If thus the sūtradhāra or the Sthāpati is the Sūta himself we shall have to modify our views about the origin of dramatic representation. The puppet shows would now be thrown into the background and our search will have to follow the footsteps of the Sūta. The Sūta, as mentioned already, was a professional reciter. As time went on, this recitation might naturally have been accompanied by music and instruments. From the fanciful account in the N. S.<sup>5</sup> it appears probable that a musician and an instrumentalist were somehow called "kuśīlava." It should be

4. N. S. II 28, cf. the verses following also in this connection.

5. nānātodyavidhāne prayogayuktah pravādane kuślah. "One who is an expert in playing on various musical instruments" XXXV, 84.

noted in this connection that the epic Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki was sung before Rāma to the accompaniment of musical instrument. The two singers—the sons of Rāma as yet unrecognised by the latter—were Kuśa and Lava by name. In any case we might well understand the Sūta being accompanied by the Kuśilavas, so much so that at the stage of dramatic representation when the Sūta turned into a Sūtradhāra, the Kuśilavas turned into pāripārśvakas, i. e., those who kept by the side of Sūtradhāra and played music.

Acceptance of the above suggestions would lead us back to a reconsideration of the four *vṛttis* mentioned by Bharata. It was the Sūta, the wandering minstrel, who must have been responsible, by accident or through experience, for the introduction of Dramatic Representation. Alone he could only recite. In the company of the Kuśilavas he might seek the aid of the latter either by way of a kind of chorus or by actually helping him with certain portions in the recitation. The form of the two epics was specially favourable to such a division of labour. The major part of the Mahābhārata and a fairly good portion of the Rāmāyaṇa are composed of dialogues. So the Sūta and the Kuśilavas could carry on the dialogue with greater effect. In the form of the epics there is no mention in the body of the verses as to who is speaking. Outside the verses we have sub-headings as 'Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca,' 'Sūta uvāca,' 'Draupadī uvāca' ("Y. said," "S. said," "D. said") and so on. In a representation such a sub-heading was not necessary. At the very commencement of the recitation Sūta would announce the rôles to be played. Curiously enough, in many of the existing plays we have an identical circumstance where the Sūtradhāra tells the audience, then and there, the rôle he is going to assume. Thus, in the prologue to the Mṛcchakaṭika, the Sūtradhāra says : eṣośmi bhoḥ kāryavaśāt prayoga vaśāt ca prākṛta-bhāṣī samvṛttah "Here, sirs, I am going to speak Prākṛt because of my part to be played." A more interesting reference is in the plays of Bhavabhūti—interesting because Bhavabhūti has a first-hand experience of the actors.<sup>6</sup> The Sūtra-

6. Bhavabhūti is described as nisarga sauhṛdena bharateṣu vartamānah, "who lived, naturally attracted, in the company of actors" (Prologue M. M.); Kavir mitradheyam a mākam, "the poet is our personal friend", says the Sūtradhāra, (Prologue M. V. C.).

dhāra in the U. R. says “ eṣośmi bhoḥ kāryavaśād āyodhyikas tadānīntanaśca saimvṛttah. Here I have turned myself, for the action of the play, into a citizen of Ayodhyā of Rāma's days.” Similarly at the end of the prologue to MM. the Sūtradhāra and his friend assume then and there the rôles of Kāmandakī and Avalokitā respectively.

There is one more reason to hold that the Sūtradhāra is the original Sūta. In almost all the plays it is the Sūtradhāra that introduces to the audience the life and lineology of the dramatist. In the earlier days this was one of the duties of the Sūta who had to study and describe the life and lineology of gods, sages, kings and great men.<sup>7</sup> No one was more fitted for the task.

It was thus the post-epic Sūta and not the puppet shows that originated dramatic representation ; the recitation of the epic and not that of religious hymns is the Bhāratī stage ; the recitation of the sūta and the kuśīlavas, the Sātvatī stage ; in the Kaiśikī vṛtti the dancer naṭī was introduced ; the Arabhaṭī is the final mode of “ full dress ” staging and from its beginning to its death, Sanskrit drama took its hero from the Sūta and the epics that he recited and never, never from the religious lore or from the host of Vedic gods.

CHAPTER VII  
ORIGIN OF SANSKRIT DRAMA  
(Conclusion)

We are now in a position to view the question of the origin of Sanskrit Drama from a broader view-point. It should be remembered that by drama, in this connection, is meant dramatic representation. In the first place, the chief person connected with the representational form of drama is the Sūta who had achieved great reputation soon after the epics. This Sūta was a professional reciter par excellence. In course of time he gathered round him two or more musicians and instrumentalists. In the early days the Sūta could be expected to represent dramatically the traditional and the mythological episodes which it was his profession to learn and recite. We have shown in an earlier place<sup>1</sup> that the word nāṭaka originally meant only the representation of traditional or mythological episodes. There is an interesting passage in the Nāṭyaśāstra which throws some light on the initial stages of such representation. With reference to nāṭaka and prakaraṇa—two early varieties of drama—a *big number of characters is prohibited*.

na mahājana-parivāram kartavyam nāṭakam prakaraṇam  
vā ye tatra kāryāḥ puruṣāś catvārah pañca vā te syuh<sup>2</sup> (33)

“In a nāṭaka or prakaraṇa it is not advisable to have a crowd of characters; four or five would do.” The Sūta and his musical friends were perhaps to answer for this small number of characters.

Thus did Sanskrit Drama originate soon after the epics. But before it assumed its rightful place as one of the most simple and straightforward means of expression and education and entertainment it had to fight a hard, hard battle. To start with the chief person connected with drama was the Sūta, a man of respectable tradition but of inferior blood.<sup>3</sup> Even the Vedic traditions condemned the Sūta after a time, to a degraded position.<sup>4</sup> The

1. Chapter III

2. N. S. XX40

3. In the laws of Manu the Sūta is classed as a cāṇḍāla the ancestor of the modern untouchable X 26.

4. cf. C. H. I. Vol I, p. 297.

legend in the N. S. of the Bharatas cursed to a Śūdra status tells the same tale in the language of a different generation.

Even popular sympathy would not carry with it the Sūta and his band. Soon after the epics, came the Emperor Aśoka under whose reign all kind of amusements were banned. It is more than probable that in his Girnar Rock Edict I<sup>5</sup> King Aśoka refers by the word "samāja," to an audience or assembly such as that entertained by the Sūta. King Piyadasi sees many dangers in a Samāja. "bahukam hi dosam samājahmi pasati devānam piyo piyadasi rājā" says the emperor. We do not say the word "samāja" refers only to dramatic representation<sup>6</sup>; however we would insist that the idea of a "Samāja" does include the audience of a dramatic representation. Even in later Sanskrit plays we find an audience usually addressed as *pariṣad*, an assembly (of connoisseurs).<sup>7</sup> That at some time, the Sūta addressed such pariṣads, open of course to the general public of taste, is obvious from the vehement attack in the laws of Manu against such pariṣads conducted by the Sūta and composed of persons not soaked with Vedic lores.

avratañām amantrāñām jātimātropajīvinām  
sahasraśah sametāñām pariṣattvam navidyate<sup>8</sup> (34)

"Even thousands would not constitute a pariṣad if they are undisciplined, un-initiated and if they make it a *profession of maintenance*."

In some of the later plays the words "Samāja" and "Sāmājika" are used in the sense of "an audience" and "a member of an audience" respectively. It could be added without hesitation that the words "Samāja" and "Pariṣad" are synonymous in this respect. In the Mālav. of Kālidāsa, the hero-king has to watch the dancing performance of Mālavikā. (Act I). "Le. us be sāmājika-s" (devi, sāmājika bhavāmah) says he to the queen. Similarly in the Prologue to the Rat. of Śrī Harṣa the Sūtradhāra says that he has attracted the attention of the sāmājika-s i.e. audience

5. Dr Woolner's edition

6. Vide "Samāja" in the Glossary *ibid.*

7. Cf. abhirūpa-bhūviṣṭhā pariṣad iyam "this house mostly consists of experts" (Prologue A Śāk)

8. M. S. XII 114.

( aye āvarjitāni sakala-sāmājikānām manāṁsi iti me niścayah ). In the Prologue to Jayadeva's *Prasanna-Rāghava* likewise the Sūtradhāra sees his actor-friend coming from through the audience with a message from the latter : nūnam etad-abhisamdhānād eva sāmājika-samājād ito' bhivartate sakhā me raṅga-taraṅgāḥ. ) The actor-friend comes in and says, "Sir, the audience ( sāmājikāḥ ) send you this instruction through me" ( bhāva, idam manmukhena eva bhavantam udīrayanti sāmājikāḥ ). These and many other references of the kind would bear out the interpretation of the word " samāja " as the audience of a dramatic performance. Such *samājas* were prohibited by the Emperor who ruled over the largest Indian Empire in history. Could we believe, as history would have us believe in all such cases, that the *samājas* flourished for the simple reason that they were prohibited? Any healthy institution in history that has been attempted to be suppressed by royal or religious rigour has either run underground into uncouth, uncultivated hands or rubber-like, has bounced with doubled vigour and vivacity. Nothing more natural, then than that the *samājas* should have persisted—though in constant fear of the authorities. There was, however, a greater chance for such *samājas* to flourish in those parts of the Empire, where Aśoka's power only hung like a shadow. Thus in southern as well as in western India could be expected a survival of and an encouragement to the *samājas*. History has some evidence to show that Sanskrit was patronised more and more in the west and in the south soon after, as well as during Aśoka's reign. This is the beginning of the revival of Sanskrit, which culminated in the shifting of the centre of culture and learning to Ujjain in the west. Most of the kings that patronised this revival were either the non-Aryan Kings in the south or the later non-Indian invaders in the west of India. We have already mentioned how the Bharatas wandered through the modern Rajputana to the south of India. If, in these circumstances, Bharata says that King Nahuṣa is the first patron, he has more reasons to say so and more cleverness in saying it.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EARLY STAGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT

(*Sūtradhāra, nati, prastāvanā and sthāpānā*)

In the preceding chapter we saw, in connection with the origin of Sanskrit Drama, the importance of the Sūta who later on came to be recognised, in the dramatic world, as the Sūtradhāra. As a matter of fact, in all the Sanskrit plays available, the first character to appear on the stage is the Sūtradhāra. We shall here attempt to sketch the career of the Sūtradhāra in the world of dramatic performances.

As already mentioned, the Sūtradhāra is usually accompanied by the musicians. It is not, however, necessary that it must be *always* so. Whether he is alone or whether he is in company of the musicians and the dancers his one function is to introduce the piece of performance to the (as he always says it, learned) audience. After performing the usual worshipping ceremony (not necessarily in the presence of the audience) he steps on the stage and informs the audience of the play and its contents. Remembering the fact that in the earlier days it was the Sūta himself who did this work in his recitation, we need not expect him any and every time, to introduce his subject or to explain the context and so on. The earliest representational form did not require any such intermittent introductions. Therein the story as well as the hero were too well known.<sup>1</sup> The various episodes and legends of the epics were already too popular to need description; contemporary episodes and events would not as well need any separate mention; and thus, in the earliest plays, the Sūtradhāra entered the stage just formally to initiate the play. In the existing Sanskrit plays this feature can be observed very frequently. Wherever the story and the characters are too well known the Sūtradhāra merely mentions them. In the A Śāk. of Kālidāsa, for example, the story is a traditionally popular one. The Sūtradhāra merely mentions the title and the story is immediately known to the audience. Where, however, the story is not so universally known he describes it for the audience. A

1. Cf. the definition of nāṭaka in N. S. XX 10 ' *prakhyāta-nāyaka* ' ' *prakhyāta-vastu-viṣaya* ' ' well known hero ' ' well known plot. '

good example is the Mṛch. of Śūdraka. Here Sūtradhāra presents the audience with a synopsis. "There lived a Brahmin merchant named Cārudatta in Ujjain. In poverty, only his mistress Vasantasenā was attached to his virtues. A love-affair between the Brahmin and her, like the vernal splendour, is dramatized by king Śūdraka who has depicted therein the ways of the world, the wickedness of life and men and Fate,"<sup>2</sup>

The three plays of Bhavabhūti are also an illustration in this respect. In U. R. the story is well known and it is merely mentioned; and the same holds true of prastāvanā in Act VII to the play within the play. In MM the whole story is narrated by Kāmanḍakī which rôle the Sūtradhāra himself has taken. The Sūtradhāra of Bhavabhūti is always more skilful in first assuming a rôle contemporary with the story. In certain cases where only parts of a well known story are dramatized the Sūtradhāra explains the context. Thus in M. V. C. the actor-friend says to the Sūtradhāra "kr̥ta prasādāḥ pāriṣadāḥ kim tu apūrvatvāt prabandhasya kathā-pradeśam samārambhe śrotum icchanti." The audience is humoured, but as the play is unusually constructed, it wants to know at the very beginning the particular part of the story" (of Rāmāyaṇa). Similarly in the V. S. of Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, dealing with the well known epic story of the Kauravas and the Pāṇavas, the Sūtradhāra gives an idea of what part of the epic story has been dramatized. With this can be compared the statement in the U. R. "atrabhavataḥ....Mahārāja-rāmasya ayam paṭṭābhiṣeka-samayah." "This is the coronation function of Rāma"—whereby Bhavabhūti informs the audience that he has dramatized the Rāmāyaṇa story subsequent to Rāma's coronation.

The above illustrations are mentioned only to point out the functions of the Sūtradhāra. In this respect, the Sanskrit Sūtradhāra evolved like the Prologues of Euripides. The Greek tragedian found Prologues necessary since his story or treatment was usually out-of-the way sort. In Sanskrit Dramas the Sūtradhāra appeared even where the story was well-known. This difference is due to the fact that the Sūtradhāra was there even before the Sanskrit Drama while the Prologues of Euripides came in as a device long after the Greek Drama.

There is another function of the Sūtradhāra which must have been one of the earliest. After informing the audience of the play etc. he immediately, but giving an intimation to the audience beforehand, assumes a rôle in the play. We have already given instances of this nature. In the early days the sketches must have been such as were conveniently composed of a few characters; the art of "make-up" i. e. the *nepathyā* must have been unknown or unavailed of. So the Sūtradhāra, at one stroke of his word, assumed the rôle required and in the new capacity introduced the other characters as well. That the Sūtradhāra *did* introduce all the characters may be reasonably imagined on the analogy of the modern village shows where on the first entry of any character, he asks the name, the purpose of the arrival and other details thereof.

Performing as he did these various functions, the Sūtradhāra was known as the Sthāpaka. As Bharata tells us<sup>3</sup> the Sūtradhāra is himself the Sthāpaka when he opens the play.

prayujya vidhinaivam tu pūrvvaraṅgam prayogataḥ  
sthāpakaḥ praviśet tatra sūtradhāra-guṇākṛtiḥ (35)

"After the initiatory stage worship should enter the Sthāpaka, whose garb and functions are the same as those of the Sūtradhāra."

As Viśwanātha, the author of the S. D., explains later on, the Sthāpaka was, for all practical purposes, known as the Sūtradhāra. The scene in which the Sūtradhāra, entered as Sthāpaka was known as the *sthāpanā* "foundation, ground work, opening," or Prologue. Thus we have *sthāpanās* in all the plays ascribed to Bhāsa. In most of them the Sūtradhāra (he is not styled as Sthāpaka here) alone enters the stage to introduce the story and the situation and the characters to the audience.

As Dramatic Art progressed things must have developed. We have already seen how music and dance were gradually introduced into such representations. With the addition of these features the functions of the Sūtradhāra had to be modified. He need no longer introduce the play in the dry, formal manner or in an equally abrupt way. (cf. the *sthāpanās* in Bhāsa's plays where the Sūtradhāra is immediately made to listen to

<sup>3</sup> N. S. V 164. Cf. also S. D. VI 26-27.

some words from behind the stage which he goes on to explain with reference to a context in the plot.)

The functions of the Sūtradhāra were not only modified but, as time went on, they multiplied. The musicians—the Kuśilavas were also brought on the stage. As there was no recitation now which they could set to music, the Kuśilavas helped the Sūtradhāra to open the play with music. Whatever the pretext under which music was played there was no doubt that the audience was more pleasantly lulled into a receptive mood. Besides supervising the overture, so to say, the Sūtradhāra had, when later on dancing was also introduced, to face a woman who sang and danced but who, after all, had to be utilised for the purpose of introducing the play. That dancing came in the wake of music is evident from the fact that the word *naṭī*, a danseuse, is a Prākṛt form. That both music and dancing were simply introduced to make the opening less formal and more pleasant and to humour the audience into a sympathetic attitude, that they had nothing to do with the play and that they had no place in the evolution of dramatic representation is recognised by Bharata himself. "Dancing plays no part in a drama." It is introduced on the stage simply because it adds to the charm of the production. Everyone has a natural weakness for dancing. It amuses the audience.<sup>4</sup> But it should not be overdone. "If dancing and music are given in excess the audience as well as the actors are likely to be tired of it."<sup>5</sup> Thus a new responsibility was thrown on the shoulders of the Sūtradhāra. Not only should music and dancing be not overdone but he had to see, in the name of his ability as manager and producer, that, in spite of their charm, they were not entirely unconnected with the show. The very circumstances under which a play was produced in those days gave the Sūtradhāra a chance to fit in music and dance. Plays in the early days, it should be remembered, were performed in the open. What would be more seemly than singing a hymn in praise of the surroundings, or more poetically, in praise of the season itself? The only favourable seasons for a performance in the open are the Spring and the Autumn. So in almost all the Sanskrit plays we find the *naṭī* singing in praise of these two seasons.

4. N. S. IV 260-263.

5. N. S. V.161.

The character of *naṭī* is interesting from one point of view. What was her position in the play or in the troupe of actors? In the early days we can well believe her to be a songstress and a danseuse and such we find her in most of the plays. She was in no better advantage, except in her natural charm and grace, than the *Kuśīlavas* who were also musicians. And yet the advent of *naṭī* marked the rarity, if not the total disappearance, of the *Kuśīlavas* in the dramatic world. Such is the conquest of charm and grace and delicacy in the world of Art! It is always the shrewd, keen-eyed Eve that is attracted by the Forbidden Fruit and then tempts the clumsy Adam on to it. Whether it was the *Sūtradhāra*, or the audience that was tempted first, the fact is clear that as time went on the *Sūtradhāra* and the *naṭī* are thrown more and more together. In some later plays like the *Mṛch.*, the *Rat.*, or the *M. R.* the *naṭī* is represented as the wife of the *Sūtradhāra*. She is not addressed as *ārye* (oh! noble lady) merely but as "my dear" and all that by the *Sūtradhāra*. Was she the wife of the *Sūtradhāra* or the wife of the *Sthāpaka*? In the first case, we have to imagine a *hereditary professional caste of naṭīs*; in the second, *merely a professional class*. A close perusal of Sanskrit plays would tempt one to believe that there gradually arose a hereditary professional caste of actors. In the prologue to the *Rat.* the *Sūtradhāra* tells his wife (*grhinī*) that his younger brother has dressed himself up in the rôle of *Yaugandharāyaṇa* (nanu ayam mama yavīyān bhrātā grīhita-yaugandharāyaṇa-bhūmikāḥ prāpta eva). By the time of *Harṣa* (607 A. D.—640 A. D.) we can believe in the existence of such a caste. Leaving aside the momentary inconveniences of some settled views in chronology we might take it as a fairly general rule that plays where the *naṭī* is represented as the wife of the *Sūtradhāra* are later in age. The *M. R.*, for example, gives interesting details of the relations between these two characters. The *Sūtradhāra* addresses his wife in these words.

guṇavati upāyanilaye sthiti-heto sādhike trivargasya  
madbhavana-nīti-vidye kūryād ārye drutam apaihi (36)

"Diligent and resourceful, you are the guide of my life; virtuous as you are, you are my helpmate to the Higher Truths; you are my domestic deity, presiding over the art of management etc."

To resume the narration. The *naṭī* thus became a permanent member of the *Sūtradhāra* band. With the aid of the *kuśīlavas* and the *naṭī*, the *Sūtradhāra* could entertain the audience and at the same time inform them of the play, the plot, the characters and so on. His work now was not mere *sthāpanā* or introduction but introduction with amusement or, to use technical words of Sanskrit dramaturgy, the *sthāpanā* was called a *prastāvanā*. The *prastāvanā* was originally nothing else but the music, the singing in praise (the Skt. root 'stu'—means "to praise") of the seasonal charm. It was the music essentially that made the difference between the *sthāpanā* and *prastāvanā*. It is only in some later plays like the M. R. or the V. S. that we read of a *prastāvanā* with no music on the stage. Music and not necessarily the *naṭī*, is the distinctive feature of the *prastāvanā*, and hence even the *Kuśīlavas* turned a *sthāpanā* into a *prastāvanā*. It would be unnecessary to stress the point too much since the Prologue was soon enough standardised.

Lastly one more feature must be pointed out which is persistent in and characteristic of all Prologues. It is a commonplace that in any ballad-singing attention is first attracted and then retained by establishing personal relations with the audience. This tendency must have existed in the earlier plays, more so since those performances were given in the open. No ruse would serve the purpose better than flattering the audience to the skies. Even in modern folksongs this feature is not to be missed. Similarly the *Sūta* and the other bards and ballad-singers in the early days praised their audience. The *Sūtradhāra* of Sanskrit plays does the same. He addresses his audience, as "noble sirs" (*āryamiśra*) "learned" (*vidvat*), "appreciative (*guṇa-grāhin*)" and so on. This feature of taking the audience into the dramatist's confidence and of establishing a personal relationship between the actors and the audience is to be found in early literature of other countries as well. We can compare the tone of *Kālidāsa*'s Prologue to his *A. Śāk.* where he says that he would not deem his performance a success unless the learned audience is pleased (*ā paritoṣād viduṣām na sādhu manye prayogavijñānam*) with, for example, the chorus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*:

Fear not for a want of sense,  
Or judgment in your audience,

That defect has been removed  
 They're prodigiously improved.  
 Thus their own ingenious natures  
 Aided and improved by learning,  
 Will provide you with spectators  
 Shrewd, attentive and discerning.<sup>6</sup>

We might as well mention, before we conclude, one difference in this respect between the Sanskrit and the early Greek plays. Personal relationship is maintained in both ; but, while in Sanskrit plays the Sūtradhāra or the prastāvanā alone is utilised for this purpose, in Greek, besides the *choi*us, even the characters within the play address the audience. Thus, again in *Frogs* :

Bacchus :—Do you see the villains and the perjurors that he told us of ?

Xanthias :—Yes, plain enough, don't you ?

Bacchus :—Ah, now I see them, indeed, quite plain and now too. (*Turning to the audience*)<sup>7</sup>

Has it not been mentioned that the Greek drama was more democratic than the Sanskrit ? At the very start they part ways.

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6. Plays by Aristophanes (Dent's edition), pp. 60-61.

7. *Ibid.* p. 16.

## CHAPTER IX

### PLOT-DEVELOPMENT IN SANSKRIT PLAYS

(The *Viśkambhaka* and the *Pravesaka*)

The play was introduced first of all to the audience. In that connection we saw that the Sūtradhāra was responsible mainly for the introduction to, and partly for the personal touch with, the audience. It should not, however, be supposed that the responsibility of the Sūtradhāra ended then and there. As the stage-manager he was responsible for the whole show. In this chapter we shall see if the Sūtradhāra had any other functions besides introducing the play and its general management.

Drama, as suggested in connection with its origin, was a representation of selections. Whenever a story is represented it should not be supposed, and it will never be found possible either, to represent each and every incident in all its details. The central theme might be a heroic deed or a noble truth; some relevant points are represented so that the central theme is set in brighter relief. Besides, from the early days, drama had had the advantage of being a complete unit by itself. Thus the story in any play proceeded along broader lines while the minor and relevant details were summarised in their proper places for the convenience of the audience. This is what is meant by plot-development here.

How, then, was a representational story developed in the earlier days? In the very beginning we can believe the Sūta or the Sūtradhāra shouldering responsibility in this respect for any representation. If it were the dialogues from the epics the Sūta would recite in company with his musicians; passages that were not in dialogue form either the Sūta recited alone or summarised. We could say all this if there were any evidence to warrant the existence of such a representational form in the earlier days. There is, however, no definite evidence for such a hypothesis. If at all we are to judge by comparisons we must go back to some other country or civilization. In connection with "Religion and Drama" it was shown how dangerous it would be to judge by comparisons. Nevertheless, we cannot

pass over a circumstance that obtains in some of the earlier Greek plays. In establishing a personal relation with the audience it was seen how closely, functionally and favourably the Sūtradhāra compared with the Greek chorus. The chorus had not this only function. "We can see that the chorus was also capable of fulfilling a very useful function. It served to punctuate the stages of the action ( as the drop curtain now serves to divide scene from scene, but with the disadvantage of arresting it entirely ). It gave a convenient interval, during which important events might be supposed to happen off the stage..... and, above all, it gave the poet an opportunity of commenting and moralizing upon the progress of the events in the play proper."<sup>1</sup> Thus it was the chorus which kept the audience, once the play commenced, in touch with the continuity of the action.

How was it done in the earlier Sanskrit dramatic representations? Could we suppose that like the Greek chorus the Sanskrit Sūtradhāra too, played an important part in the plot development?

A glance at some of these Sanskrit plays would reveal that from a known period this kind of plot-development was carried out in a peculiar way. There was nothing like a chorus or any character or characters equivalent to it to keep the audience in touch with the events off the stage. On the other hand, some characters in the play itself were utilised for the purpose ; further, the type of characters used in this way seems to have been fixed—since the traditional authorities on dramaturgy not only recognised that fact but turned it into a kind of a technicality to be strictly observed by dramatists. Two varieties of such a technique are recognised—one known as Viṣkambhaka and the other as Praveshaka. Three authorities (N. S., D. R., and S. D.) define them in practically identical phrases. In the D. R. these two are defined as

( i ) Vṛtta-vartisyamāṇānām kathāṁśānām nidarśakāḥ  
samkṣepārthaḥ tu viṣkambho madhyapātra-prayojitāḥ  
( I-59 ) ( 37 )

" A Viṣkambhaka is that which summarises, through characters of an intermediate status, past and future incidents," and

( ii ) tadvad-evānudāttokyā nīca-pātra-prayojitāḥ  
praveshonka-dvayasyāntāḥ śeṣārthasyopasūcakāḥ  
( I. 60 ) ( 38 )

1. C. E. Robinson *The Genius of the Greek Drama*, Intro. p. 16.

"A *praveśa* ( *ka* ) is similar, only the characters are of a lower status, and the *praveśa* itself appears in between two acts. The *praveśa* further suggests *śeṣārtha* i. e. the remaining ( in other words, not quite important or relevant ) details. "

Before trying to analyse these definitions and distinctions we shall see, by reference to some Sanskrit plays, the parts played therein by the *Viṣkambhaka* and the *Praveśaka*.

Let us take into consideration some of *Bhāsa*'s plays and examine how such wants, if any, have been fulfilled. We shall take the scenes as they are in the text, viz., as *viṣkambha* or *praveśaka* or under whatever name they appear. In S. V., for example, we have three *praveśakas* ( Acts II, IV and V ) and one *viṣkambhaka* ( Act VI ). ( As a matter of fact it is known as *miśra* or mixed *viṣkambhaka* since Sanskrit and *Prākrit* are to be found together in the dialogue ). All the *praveśakas* here have practically nothing to add to the story ; on the other hand, every one of them introduces the following main scene. In Act IV the *praveśaka* informs the audience that the scene to follow is laid in the *Samudra-geṛha*. In contrast to these *praveśakas* the *viṣkambhaka* in the last act is important for the actual development of the story. It gives the audience information about an incident which, for some reason, has not been represented on the stage. Is this difference between a *viṣkambhaka* and a *praveśaka* accidental, or does a *viṣkambhaka* alone help the plot-development while a *praveśaka* is utilised for purposes like the stage-setting etc.? If the *viṣkambhaka* is a vital factor in the plot-development we can understand why the traditional authorities speak of *Madhyama-pāṭra*, i. e. characters of an intermediary status and Sanskrit language ( mainly ) in this connection. We have already said that the incidents about the hero and the heroine could be described only by characters of a fairly high status ; this surmise would be quite justified if the *viṣkambhaka* alone played the part of the Greek chorus, viz., of summarising " important events.....supposed to happen off the stage " while the *praveśaka* was merely a kind of scene-shift, where as the authorities say, *nīca-pāṭra* i. e. characters of a lower status might be utilised.

That such was the earlier and genuine difference between the *viṣkambhaka* and the *praveśaka* is made more evident by the three

plays of Kālidāsa. The distinction has been emphasised by the genius of that dramatist. If the viṣkambhaka would connect two main episodes by the narration of the interim incidents, it was found very handy for the original constructive art of Kālidāsa. Not only the unrepresented incidents, but those newly added or newly interpreted could also be conveyed to the audience through the viṣkambhaka. Thus in Vik. Act. III, the viṣkambhaka plays an important part in the development of the story, so much so that a complete idea of the course to be run by the story, is suggested only thereby. The two disciples of Bharata manage to convey to the audience how Urvaśī is to be re-united with Vikrama, how she loves the hero, and how long she would live with the hero. With this information got already the audience is quite prepared to sympathise with Vikrama, first in Act IV, when Urvaśī is lost to him and then in Act V when Urvaśī leaves him. The major part of the main scene in Act IV is, under these circumstances, more a lyrical passage than a lunatic's raving. This example shows us the viṣkambhaka in a slightly new light. In plays where the whole story is already known to the audience there is no practical necessity of letting the audience know the incidents left out or supposed to have taken place during the interval. Like that of Vikrama and Urvaśī the story of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā too was well known from the days of the Mahābhārata. Theoretically there was thus no need of and no place for the viṣkambhaka. But viṣkambhakas there are in A. Śāk. The explanation is obvious, as an analysis would show. The viṣkambhaka would not be strictly necessary in such a story if it is to be represented precisely as in the original. But when the dramatist introduces changes, the audience must be informed if its sympathy and interest are to be retained. The changes of an able dramatist would, of course, be such as would affect the main incidents concerning the hero and the heroine. Thus we come back to what has been just said about the viṣkambhaka, viz., it is concerned with incidents unrepresented on the stage, or supposed to have happened during the interval and also incidents connected with the hero and the heroine or the central theme. In the instance quoted above (Vik. III) it is not a new episode, that has been introduced; but a new meaning, a new place, and a new significance have been given to the one already known; and the playwright conveys it to the audience through

the viṣkambhaka. Similarly in Mālav. the viṣkambhaka is to be found in the very first act where the whole background, of the play, has been painted with lines suggestive of the future incidents. The story of king Agnimitra and his love-affairs might not have been so popular but the viṣkambhaka in the beginning promises some interesting developments.

Of a greater interest and a greater importance still are the two viṣkambhakas in A. Śāk—one in Act III and the other in Act IV. The story of the play, as mentioned so often, was sufficiently popular. Kālidāsa, however, does not seem to have written the play for the interest and estimate it had with the populace. His interest was not merely to represent dramatically the traditional story. In Act III there is a viṣkambhaka which is very short and thus very easy to analyse. In this viṣkambhaka the whole of Act III has been brilliantly and artistically introduced. Duṣyanta's love for Śakuntalā has been sufficiently revealed so far. Now the first thing that the audience knows from the viṣkambhaka is that Śakuntalā is not keeping well. But the words used are enough to suggest to the audience of those days what this "un-wellness" is (ātapa-laṅghanād balavad-asvastha-śarīrā Śakuntalā). The whole of Act III—Śakuntalā writing a love letter, Duṣyanta overhearing her when she reads it out to her friends etc.—is the pure invention of the dramatist. A dramatic situation is created to bring together the hero and the heroine when both of them are mad and blind with love. What would happen when they meet each other? What if this love's intrigue would lead, in this stage of madness, to something beyond the limits of reason or decency? All may be fair in love but it would not be fair to talk of all that afterwards. But Kālidāsa gives no chance for the audience to feel unnecessarily virtuous, not even out of neighbourly considerations. In the viṣkambhaka itself the Śiṣya informs the audience that, after all, the venerable Gautamī would come to see Śakuntalā. As a matter of fact Gautamī does come in just to prevent Duṣyanta from flouting stage etiquette. That the audience both demanded and understood such assurances could be reasonably believed, since Kālidāsa himself describes it in his prologue as "cultured" (abhi-rūpa bhūyiṣṭhā pariṣad iyam); at least Kālidāsa wrote only for such an audience.

Likewise the viṣkambhaka in Act IV prepares the audience,

in a clever way, for the new incidents and the original interpretation of the dramatist. To start with, Kālidāsa has invented a situation and that situation has been described at length, viz., the part to be played by the ring; secondly, that the whole episode should be interpreted as a tragedy in the highest sense is suggested throughout the viṣkambhaka. The disturbing calmness of the undisturbed morn, the uneasiness of the friends, Duṣyanta not sending any message, the lonely and forlorn figure of Śakuntalā seated at the door of the hut, the uncouth outburst of a choleric sage who has reasons to pronounce an unkind curse—all this is suggestive of the atmosphere into which the play proceeds from now on. Lastly, the curse of Durvāsas must have been significant to the audience. That curse is symbolic, the tragedy is destined. The audience will sympathise with the heroine, an innocent victim of the cruel and infallible Destiny (me vacanam anyathā bhavitum nārhati; my words could never be taken back, says Durvāsas ).

The viṣkambhaka with such a significance for the development of the central theme may be compared with the praveshakas in these three plays. There are four praveshakas in all. (A. Śāk. VI, Mālav. III and V, and Vik. II). In all these there is nothing that affects the progress of the main events; no incidents are mentioned that would be important in their bearing on the plot. In some places the praveshaka is there for no other purpose except introducing the following main scene. In others, the praveshaka is nothing but a kind of a stage-shift in favour and for the convenience of the audience; or it merely emphasises certain points of the incidents already represented (cf. Malav. III ).

It would appear from the foregoing as if some presumption is being logically worked out. The above examples have been discussed not because they bear out any presumption but that they reveal a genuine difference, from the early days, between the viṣkambhaka and the praveshaka. There might be, as there are, instances to the contrary. That in itself would prove nothing as the mere discussion so far would prove nothing by itself. There are many possibilities; hence many considerations will have to be looked into. It is possible that soon enough circumstances that warranted the existence of such a difference between the viṣkambhaka and the praveshaka as explained above

no longer existed, or it is possible that the dramatist himself would be an artist superior enough to rise above the tradition or inferior enough, not to utilise that tradition properly. As a matter of fact, even after Kālidāsa, some of the best Sanskrit plays do show this earlier difference between the viṣkambhaka – that serves the purpose of the stage convenience. The U. R. of Bhavabhūti is a good example. In all there are four viṣkambhakas in U. R., one each in Acts II, III, IV and VI. In all these four could be observed :

- (i) the situations newly introduced by the dramatist,
- (ii) the earlier situations themselves newly arranged or newly interpreted, and
- (iii) incidents that could not be represented on the stage but were all the same essential for the development of the central theme.

Thus in Act II the viṣkambhaka serves the purpose of not merely summarising the events during the 12 years interval since Act I, but summarising only those that are relevant to the dramatist's purpose. Similarly in Act VI the viṣkambhaka describes an event which could not be represented on the stage, viz. the battle between Lava and Candraketu. In Act IV, the viṣkambhaka serves the purpose of letting the audience know the change of scene and the change of the atmosphere or the tone of the play. We are not any more in the Dāṇḍaka forest lamenting with Rāma but have arrived at Vālmīki's hermitage where peace and happiness may be legitimately expected. In all these cases the arrangement of the incident is entirely the dramatist's invention. The most emphatic instance, in this respect, is Act III – the masterpiece of Bhavabhūti's art as acknowledged by many a good critic. Therein we have a situation so delicate and so celestial. To enjoy the grandeur, the nobility and the subtlety of the main scene, how successfully important is the viṣkambhaka ? We learn from the viṣkambhaka that Rāma is coming to the Pañcavati – a spot in the Dāṇḍaka forest where he spent for the last time, the happiest time of his life with his wife Sītā. (Note that in Act I only these memories are referred to.) Those memories would now oppress him worse because of his already dejected mental condition as described in Act II. To make things still worse, Sītā herself

has been sent there; and what is artistically and effectively tragic, Sītā is not visible to any one except her friend Tamasā. With this information the audience is in a mood to sympathise with the sorrow and to admire the nobility of both Rāma and Sītā. On the whole in this play the original significance of the viṣkambhaka, viz (i) to narrate, and fill up the gaps in the important and relevant episodes, and (ii) to explain the equally important and relevant artistic innovations—this significance has been retained. As the scenes in which the various episodes are laid are too well known no characters are wasted—as in a praveśaka—in merely introducing the scene. It is more than a mere accident that there are no praveśakas in the U. R.

The other play of Bhavabhūti—the MM.—has the same observations for a critic. The play is technically known as a *prakarāṇa* i.e. an incident from the common, human world dramatically represented. As in the Mālav. of Kālidāsa there is a viṣkambhaka in the very first Act of MM. where not only the whole plot is summarised but all the characters, their positions and their mutual relations in the play are briefly narrated. Then there are three more viṣkambhakas—one each in Acts V, VI and IX. In all these three it is the novelty of the situations to follow that is depicted. The author has introduced some new artistic features as well as some other dramatic situations; such original strokes are emphasised in the viṣkambhakas. Thus Acts V and IX are entirely new features; the second is purely a lyrical or musical one abounding in descriptions of nature while the first stealthily introduces the crematorium in all its dreadful hideousness. It is only in Act VI that the viṣkambhaka describes the incidents in the interval. But the two incidents mentioned are such that (as in Act VI of the U. R.) they could not be represented on the stage; the death of Aghoraghāṇṭa for a technical reason and the marriage procession for a practical difficulty. On the other hand the four praveśakas (Acts II, III, VII and VIII) serve the purpose of merely introducing the following main scene (Act III), or of describing the development of the sub-plot (Acts III and VII), or of first summarising the preceding events with reference to the relevant points therein (Act II). Thus the distinct nature of the viṣkambhaka and the praveśaka has been strictly maintained—the viṣkambhaka connected artistically

with central theme and the *praveśaka* connected practically with stage-convenience.

It is time now to turn back to the technical definitions of the *viśkambhaka* and the *praveśaka* as given by the traditional authorities. From the passages quoted above, it will be seen that the *viśkambhaka* and the *praveśaka* were distinguished even in those days. The grounds of distinction, however, appear to be superficial. Thus according to those definitions the difference between the two is threefold :

- (i) difference due to the status of the characters as *madhyama* and *nīca*,
- (ii) difference of the place in which each occurs as at the beginning of the first act or in between the subsequent acts, and
- (iii) difference where one suggests past and future events while the other narrates some unimportant events, (*śeśārtha*).

None of these three reveals the whole truth. The first, as has been suggested above, was a mere accident of the early circumstances where the plays were concerned with heroes and heroines, of an extraordinarily high status; the second loses much of its significance when in between two acts *viśkambhakas* are found as free and frequent as *praveśakas*; while the last is doubtful for two reasons. (a) In some of the best plays are found *viśkambhakas* whose point is not at all so much to narrate incidents past and future (*vṛtta*-and *vartisyamāṇa*). In Act IX, for example, of Bhavabhūti's MM. is a *śuddha* i.e. unmixed *viśkambhaka*. No relevant incidents past or future are summarised here. The following main scene is introduced in the first three or four sentences and the rest of the profuse *viśkambhaka* is taken up by a description of nature. (b) Secondly, the very interpretation of *śeśārtha*, as given above, seems to be doubtful. Even as early as Viśwanātha of S. D. a confusion in this respect is noticeable. Viśwanātha who merely repeats the earlier rules has interpreted the phrase "*śeśārtha*" in D. R. as "*śeśam viśkambhake yathā*; otherwise everything else as in the *viśkambhaka*," which means that he recognises only the first two differences. Even in N. S. which should be the earliest of the three this same superficial distinction is recognised

( Cf. XX. 32-39 ). The *praveśaka* is a convenient summary of lengthy episodes ( 36 ) and the *viṣkambhaka* is similar ( 37 ). In the first the characters are of a lower status ( 33 ) while in the second they are of an intermediary status ( 37 ).

It should not be supposed that these treatises have entirely misunderstood the *viṣkambhaka* and the *praveśaka*. From one point the formulation of these rules was fortunate in that they prevented once for all bad writers from writing good plays even by accident. Their rules are based on observations. Those observations might have been incomplete or superficial with the result that the deductions therefrom are incomplete and superficial. The chief reason is love for mere forms and lack of historical or scientific outlook. That the *viṣkambhaka* and the *praveśaka* originated with purposes different, as suggested by us, seems more reasonable if an equally reasonable history of the early development could be traced. In the early stages the *Sūtradhāra* recited or summarised the story at the very beginning. In some of the best plays the *viṣkambhaka* fulfils that function. (cf. *Mālav.* I and *M. M.* I). Thus it appears that at some stage the *viṣkambhaka* replaces *Sūtradhāra* in one of the latter's traditional functions. All he had to do now, at the commencement of the play was to introduce the poet and the play. The introduction of the play was simple ; he would mention the name or the central theme of it. The introduction of the poet, however, must have been a complicated affair. Mention of the name would not carry weight or conviction. The poet had to be introduced not as individual but as an artist. In other words, the artistic methods and measures of the dramatist had to be introduced and explained, if necessary. The *Sūtradhāra* as the manager of the show, was more responsible. He could not leave the stage after the formal *prastāvanā* ; we could imagine him waiting there to step out any and every time a new or clever artifice was employed by the dramatist. He would address the audience just before such a scene and explain the delicate situations that could not be understood merely by watching the course of events on the stage. Now and then he had to get up and summarise the incidents relevant to the story but not represented on the stage. Thus in the early days the *Sūtradhāra* himself must have been fulfilling the functions that later on are carried out by the *viṣkambhakas*. And this evolution of the *viṣkambhaka* from

one of the early functions of the Sūtradhāra, might be responsible for the Sanskrit, and not the Prākṛt language, being regularly found therein. We could believe such an early situation not merely on the strength of inference but on actual observations in the modern folk representations—representations of the populace which are ever more honest, more enthusiastic and more conveniently situated to continue the tradition unbroken, unaffected and unmodified. It is probable that as the art of dramatic representation developed with regularity, the Sūtradhāra was distinguished in his two rôles, (i) when he appeared at the very beginning, and (ii) when he appeared during the interval. In the plays and situations discussed so far, the viṣkambhaka, more or less precisely, fulfils the second rôle with all its bearings.

In giving these examples we have not the least intention of conveying that plays in which the viṣkambhaka fulfils the supposed second function of the Sūtradhāra are earlier in age than those in which it does not. The only suggestion made is that such plays reveal a natural development of an earlier tendency. This circumstance might or might not be concerned with the relative priority of these plays. Śūdraka's Mṛchh. for example, has neither viṣkambhakas nor praveśakas. Could it be reasonably said that the play, therefore, is one of the earliest? This absence of interludes might be due to the fact that the incidents of the story are so well knit together in one continuous whole. Could it be said, on the other hand, that this very latter feature shows that the play is one of the later, if not the latest? In Viśākhadatta's M. R. there are two praveśakas in Act V and Act VI. The first differs from the second, introducing as it does a new situation wherein the *mudrā* or the signet plays the part of involving the Rākṣasa into one of the worst complications. In Act VI, the praveśaka simply summarises the events. In spite of this difference both are styled as praveśakas. Is it on a merely technical (superficial enough) ground viz. that the characters belong to a lower status and speak in Prākṛt, that the interlude to Act V is called a praveśaka—while it shows features of a genuine viṣkambhaka? Could we, because of this scrupulous observance of technicality, assign the play to a fairly later age?..... This, however, is not the time, nor is it the place, to attempt a definite answer to such questions.

One thing will have to be noted in this connection. With the exception of the plays of Bhavabhūti all other post-Kālidāsa plays show a confusion between the genuine viṣkambhaka and a praveśaka. The plays of Śrī-Harṣa (601-640 A.D.) are an illustration to the point. In Rat. and Nag. together, there are two viṣkambhakas (Rat. I, Nag. IV). In the first the story of the play is introduced with the appropriate background. In Nag., Act IV, the viṣkambhaka has no point whatever. Nothing related to the past events is mentioned; the only practical use is to let the audience know that the following main scene is laid on the sea-shore (*samudra-velā*). In other words, the viṣkambhaka here serves the purpose that stage-equipment or curtain would serve in the modern plays and the praveśaka would serve in the older plays. In this function the viṣkambhaka and the praveśaka have been indiscriminately utilised by Śrī-Harṣa. (He has, however, recognised an apparent distinction according to the status of and the language spoken by the characters.) Thus the three praveśakas in Rat. II, III and IV, and the praveśaka in Nāg. I serve the same purpose of introducing the main scene to follow. Beyond that they have no other function in the play. Probably Śrī-Harṣa himself felt the pointlessness and monotony of such plays; for in Nag. he has initiated a new method of introducing the characters or the scene. As soon as the name of a character is mentioned in some connection in the dialogue, that character enters on to the stage. In Act I, for example, the heroine says that if she stands there talking to unknown men some hermit (*tāpasa*) might detect her. No sooner is the word "tāpasa" mentioned than that character enters. Similarly, in Act II the heroine asks her friend if there is a remedy for her suffering. Her friend replies, "there is, if he (i. e. the hero) were to come here" and lo! the hero does come in before his name is mentioned. Again in the same Act the female friend says that Mitrāvasu (the heroine's brother) might be expected any moment, and who should step in but the very Mitrāvasu referred to! The audience would, in this way, know the characters as well as the context. This only shows that the earlier viṣkambhakas and praveśakas had lost their original significance, had been confused and had deteriorated, to a dull type where the dialogue was so standardised as to be conventionally monotonous.

A last instance might be given to show the unpopularity and consequent decay of the *viṣkabhaka* and the *praveśaka*. In Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa's V. S. there is one *viṣkambhaka* (Act II) and one *praveśaka* (Act III). Both fulfil the same superficial function of summarising the incidents during the interval and of introducing the main scene to follow. The dramatist, when he created new situations or introduced incidents not represented on the stage, had to resort to newer methods. In Act IV the death of Karna's son is described though it is not so relevant to the central theme as to justify that lengthy description. In Act VI a new situation has been invented by the dramatist. But the way in which the *Cārvāka Rākṣasa* is introduced and made to carry on the mischief is not only tedious in itself but is also responsible for the subsequent stupid and meaningless developments in that Act.

The earliest *Sūtradhāra* who proudly and pompously introduced new situations was thus at last reduced, through the *viṣkambhaka*, to a superfluous character (or circumstance) that served as a machine talking in monotonous accents.

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## CHAPTER X

### THE VIDŪṢAKA

The discussion in the last chapter has carried us to a far later stage in the development of Sanskrit Drama. In connection with the *prastāvanā*, the various elements and characters related thereto have been described so far. There is, however, one more character which whether it is earlier or later, appears in the *prastāvanā* of some Sanskrit plays and which is mentioned in books on dramaturgy,<sup>1</sup> along with ; and as part of the definition of a *prastāvanā*. That character is the *Vidūṣaka* or the Brahmin court-fool. Is the *Vidūṣaka* in any way connected with the origin of Sanskrit Drama? What light does that character throw on the development of Sanskrit Drama? Such and similar questions will have to be answered before an accurate and a complete picture of the Sanskrit Dramatic literature could be formed.

To start with, it would be better to meet the *Vidūṣaka* in the plays themselves rather than in other places as books on dramaturgy etc. The character of the *Vidūṣaka* seems to be one of the earliest. He could be met with even in the earliest known group of Sanskrit plays, viz., in that ascribed to *Bhāsa*. The *S. V.*, the *Avi.*, and the *Cār.*—the three plays wherein the *Vidūṣaka* appears—can in another respect, be distinguished from the remaining ten of that group (with the probable exception of the *P. Y.*) ; the subject matter of these three is concerned with life story of the traditional and mortal heroes of royal races. It has been already suggested that, from the very beginning, plays in Sanskrit dealt with the life-story of either kings or gods. It should be now noted in addition that the *Vidūṣaka* is found only in the luxurious company of princes. Wherever the hero is a mortal king, historical or traditional (history and tradition were not distinguished in those days) the *Vidūṣaka* appears on the stage. Is it mere coincidence? Or was that character connected in any way to the nature of the hero and of the plot? When, with the laps of time, mythology too merged into tradition even mythological heroes like king *Vikrama* in the *Vik.* of *Kālidāsa* were provided with a

1. D. R. III, 7-8 ; S. D. 31-32.

Vidūṣaka. That the Vidūṣaka is a personal and an intimate friend of the hero-king is obvious even to a casual reader of Sanskrit plays; that the Vidūṣaka is a court-fool is also made evident by some of the Sanskrit plays; and that the Vidūṣaka is a confirmed Brahmin fool with physical as well as mental perversions is a tradition accepted by all the later Sanskrit dramatists.

How did such a character appear at all on the Sanskrit stage? How was it that a Brahmin was represented in such a ludicrous light, especially during those early days when a Brahmin was highly respected through love and fear and habit?

It has been referred to above that, by authorities on dramaturgy, the Vidūṣaka is mentioned in connection with the *prastāvanā*. The S. D. has these words :

naṭī vidūṣako vā'pi pāripārśvaka eva vā  
sūtradhārena sahitāḥ samlāpam yatra kurvate  
āmukham tat tu vijñeyam nāmnā prastāvanāpi sā (39)

“ The *prastāvanā* or the opening is that where the *naṭī* or the actor-friend or the Vidūṣaka appears in a dialogue with the *Sūtradhāra*. ”

The *prastāvanā* as well as the *Sūtradhāra* have been shown to be the earliest features in the development of Sanskrit Drama. Can the Vidūṣaka also, mentioned in that connection, be an equally earlier feature? Or can it be said that the S. D. being one of the latest treatises (the D. R. too belongs to the 9th or 10th century A. D. ), has entirely misunderstood the significance and has been misled by the superficial features of the character of the Vidūṣaka?

(i) It is true that Vidūṣaka is the closest friend of the hero (who, except in the *Cār.* and the *Mṛchh.* ) is invariably a king. In Bhāsa's S. V., a play belonging to the earliest group of known dramas, the Vidūṣaka is represented as having some of those traits which were later standardised. He refers to hunger and eatables. He is said to be a talkative person<sup>2</sup> which opinion is quite justified throughout the play. But Vasantaka, as he is called here, is not such a perverted fool as he is made to appear in some later plays. Nay; on the contrary, he is not only a

2. Also cf. *Rat.* I., *A. Śāk.* II., *Mālav.* III., *Mṛchh.* VI., etc.

sincere friend but a close observer of human nature and quite a resourceful helpmate. There is, moreover, one function which is fulfilled by the Vidūšaka, a function that could not be fulfilled by any other character, and hence which could be said to be the purpose and the peculiarity of his. He is the only character, who helps to introduce the hero, who serves as a foil to the latter and who is the only medium between the hero and the other characters on the one hand and between the hero and the audience on the other. One might even go to the length of saying that in all such plays the hero is introduced in all his relevant personality by the Vidūšaka and the Vidūšaka alone. He introduces not only the character but the scene and the situation as well. The audience is amused and instructed when the Vidūšaka describes, in homely and humorous phrases, the scene laid. In most of the Sanskrit plays, whether earlier or later, the Vidūšaka is utilised to give the description of the particular scene, surroundings and time. Thus in S. V. IV, Vasantaka describes the sights of the garden.<sup>3</sup> *The Vidūšaka always speaks in the Prākṛt dialect*, let us remember.

(ii) The Vidūšaka appears to be a man of wide experience and keen observation. He is made responsible for some of the best sayings. It is a speciality with him to summarise, in pithy phrases, social experience and outlook. Strangely enough, in his early days he is one of those shrewd men who know what to say and when and where. Thus in the Mṛchh. III he protests that he is not such a fool as not to know when and where to joke (yathā nāma aham mūrkhaḥ tat kim pariḥāsasya api deśakālam na jānāmi). When a right thing is done in a right way, the Vidūšaka is not slow to appreciate it. In the S. V. he compliments the King on his proposed visit to Padmāvati as that lady is suffering from headache. "Behaviour begets behaviour" is his word of wisdom. (Satkāro hi nāma satkāreṇa pratiṣṭaḥ prītim utpādayati). Similarly, in his usual homely allusions could be seen his keen power of observation. That the Vidūšaka was keen and clever is borne out by some of the later classical plays which retain this trait of his. Thus, however different the three Vidūšakas in the three plays of Kālidāsa might be, all of them are men of experience and

3. Also cf. Rat. I, A. Śāk. II, Mālav. III, Mṛchh. VI, etc.

observation and could give utterance to simple and sensible truisms.<sup>4</sup> The fact that the *Vidūṣaka* is a Brahmin partly explains and is partly explained by this feature. A Brahmin was then generally respected as the repository of knowledge and experience; and a Brahmin was the only one qualified to teach and criticise. In a Brahmin *Vidūṣaka* therefore any statement would both be understandable and justifiable. Instances might be multiplied to show how the *Vidūṣaka* and the *Vidūṣaka alone* is made the mouthpiece of common-sense truths. The following would give an idea of Kālidāsa's *Vidūṣaka*.

- ( i ) *lotreṇa gṛhītasya kumbhīlakasya asti vā prativacanam*  
What could a thief caught red-handed say ? (Vik. II)
- ( ii ) *prāvīṇ-ṇadī iva a-prasannā gatā devī*—The Queen is as disturbing (i.e. enraged) as a river in rainy season. (Vik. II)
- ( iii ) *chinna-hasto matsye palāyite nirviṇṇo dhīvaro bhaṇati*  
*dharma me bhaviṣyati iti*—The dejected fisherman, when the fish escapes him, might say he has done a meritorious deed, in not killing it. (Vik. III)
- ( iv ) *alam atra ghṛṇayā aparādhī śāsanīyah*—Show no mercy. An offender must be punished. (Vik. V)
- ( v ) *kadāpi satpuruṣāḥ śoka-vaktavyā na bhavanti, nanu*  
*pravāte pi niṣkampā girayah*—Good (or great) men never give way to sorrow. Mountains do not tremble even in storms. (A. Śāk. VI)
- ( vi ) *pañdita-paritoṣa-pratyayā nanu mūḍhā jātiḥ*—It is the fools that are always goaded by the approbation of the learned. (Mālav. II)
- ( vii ) *na khalu mātā-pitarau bhartr̄viyogaduḥkhitām duhitaram draṣṭum pārayataḥ*—No parents could ever stand the miserable plight of their daughter separated from her husband. (ibid.).
- ( viii ) *daridra ātura iva vaidyena upaniyamānam auṣadham*  
*ichhasi*—You are like a poor patient who longs for a doctor's medicine. (Mālav. II). (40)

4. For a further analysis of Kālidāsa's *Vidūṣaka*, see Chapter XIII.

(iii) The Vidūšaka is not merely an experienced man but his experience is cast in a typically Hindu outlook. He is a confirmed fatalist. It is probable that he is usually called a "Vaidheya"—which means not so much a fool as a firm believer in "Vidhi" or fate. The half-pathetic and the half-comic situations and sentiments of his reveal "a man that Fortune's buffets and rewards hath taken" with no thanks. How piteously he complains in the *Mṛchh.* that everything goes wrong with him! ( mama punar brāhmaṇasya sarvam eva viparītam pariṇāmati ). Neither in the *S. V.* nor in the *A. Śāk.* do we find the Vidūšaka on the stage to witness the happy reunion of the hero and the heroine. It is quite characteristic of him to be the unwilling victim of both pain and pleasure. What wonder then if he were to believe that against the freaks of fate a human being is helpless? "Who can challenge Fate? Everything is so and so, i. e. as destined" ( anati-kramāṇīyo hi vidhiḥ īdṛśam idānīm etat ) are his words of consolation to the king in the *S. V.* Similarly in the *A. Śāk.* VI, he consoles King Duṣyanta saying that Fate is ever powerful ( bhavitavyatā khalu balavatī ). This feeling of helplessness and this fatalistic outlook of the Vidūšaka could be instructively compared with the unrealistic ravings and bragging of the hero—as he is usually found to be doing in most plays.

(iv) The fore-going is sufficient to show that the Vidūšaka is an experienced Brahmin of a fatalistic and resourceful nature. How or why is it that the Vidūšaka is always supposed to be, and in later Sanskrit plays is always represented as a fool? Why was a traditionally cultured Brahmin required to play a cultivated fool? How did a Brahmin come to be a Vidūšaka and did a Vidūšaka turn into a perverted fool? These are the questions to be considered before a correct understanding of that character could be had.

Why was a Brahmin, in the first place, introduced as the Vidūšaka? The answer to this question has been already suggested above. The character of the hero was invariably too exalted from the point of view of social status and besides, the hero as he is represented in almost all the Sanskrit plays is "His Amorousness" first and "His Highness or Majesty" next. In all these plays, moreover, it is the private life and leanings of the

hero that are to be represented. Would such a royal hero condescend to talk of his love affairs to the ordinary characters introduced on the stage? Could the ministers and the menials and the maid-servants be deemed qualified to talk openly with or about the hero in his love affairs? True, the heroine is the fittest person in this respect. But she is too shy and too noble to talk freely with or about the hero. Moreover she is the end and not the means of the development of the love-story. Who but a Brahmin, then could be more suitable to carry out this responsibility? By birth he belongs to the highest caste; by his caste, he has distinctive privileges and immunities. This sense of immunity helps to bring out the characters and the situation in bolder relief. The Brahmin *Vidūṣaka* would be a friend of a status sufficiently high for the king and would also justify the confidence placed in him. Thus in the earliest plays, we would imagine the character of a Brahmin introduced. This character must have served the purpose of painting the hero in contrast to as well as in some life like aspects. This is the reason why the *Vidūṣaka*, in all Sanskrit plays, speaks in a *Prākṛit* dialect. He interprets the cultured and the cultivated sentiments of the hero to the populace.

For the functions he had to perform, it was not necessary that the *Vidūṣaka* should be either learned or pedantic. Often-times, as in the *Avi. II* of *Bhāsa*, he is called an *avādika* (i.e. a heterodox fellow); he quotes the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* as a *nātyaśāstra* (a book on dramaturgy) and he compares himself to an uncultured prostitute (*prākṛita-gaṇikā*). The various names of his in the different plays are in themselves evidence to show that he made no claims to traditional or cultural learnings. Such names as *Vasantaka*, *Mādhavya*, *Māṇavaka*, *Maitreya*, etc. have no association with the prominent names in the history of Brahmanic culture and learning. In the plays, too, the responsibilities of the *Vidūṣaka* were not directed either at holy purposes and functions or at any communication with the higher worlds. What was needed of him was more of common sense, and paradoxical as it might seem, the *Vidūṣaka* had a fund of common sense. Moreover, for the chief and lively purpose of helping his hero-friend in his love-affairs, the *Vidūṣaka* had to be a man loving intrigue and scandal. As a Brahmin he had an inborn capacity for intrigue and scandal. As a member of the highest

caste he could poke his nose into any affair and he could talk with an irresponsible laxity. It was this capacity for intrigue and scandal that probably earned for him the name "Vidūšaka" meaning "a scandalmonger" (lit. one who spoils or disfigures). Thus in Mālav. I., the king speaks of his friend Vidūšaka as a kāryāntara-saciva, i.e. a counsellor in a different sort of affairs. Similarly in the same play the younger queen refers to the Vidūšaka as Kāmatantra-saciva, i.e. a counsellor in love-affairs (IV)

We can now see as to how or why the Vidūšaka deteriorated into a classical fool. The nature of the responsibilities he had to carry out brought him into closer and closer contact with the female world, high and low, in the play. From the plays of Bhāsa to those of Śrī Harṣa the Vidūšaka moves in the world of the harem and the maid-servants. It is in these circumstances and not when he is with the king that the Vidūšaka plays the fool. He had to be amusing if he had to achieve his purpose. Being a clever man, he knows his jokes with the maids and the menials, as well as with the hero and the heroine. It is the increasing association of the Vidūšaka with the menials of the harem that is responsible for conveniently turning him into a fool. Stupidity is the price paid by the Vidūšaka to gain access into the world of the heroine and her associates. One must be a deserving hero or a harmless fool to seek the company and the confidence of the beauties of the harem.

There is yet another feature that might explain why the Vidūšaka had to be a fool. It has long been the tendency of dramatists to represent their hero as a successful adventurer against innumerable odds. To be a hero one has not only to meet but plunge into dangers; nay, the greater the number of dangers the nobler hero one would be. Naturally all sorts of dangers and complications were placed in a hero's path. Some playwrights after Bhāsa utilised the Vidūšaka in creating such complications. In adding to the complications the Vidūšaka was only carrying out his original responsibility of showing the hero in noblest colours. The complications created by him, unfortunate pessimist and fatalist as he was, could be expected to be unfortunate, ill-placed and hence comic. It was only a question of time that a Vidūšaka who created such unfortunate situa-

tions should be called a fool. Thus in the *Vik.* II he commits the folly of letting out the secret of King Vikrama's love for *Urvaśi*. In the *Mālav.* IV he talks aloud in his sleep and lets a similar secret out. In *Rat.* of course, he is made to commit series of systematic and stereotyped follies. It is, however, only in some of the later plays like those of King *Harṣa* that the *Vidūṣaka* is the *traditional perfect fool*. Once he became that he ceased to be of any significance in a play. If the *Vidūṣaka* is to be a perfect fool from the very beginning how could he serve as a medium between the hero and the audience, or between the hero and the heroine? How could he be expected to raise laughter by his semi-cynical generalisations and his fresh and ill-placed sallies? How could he interpret the finer sentiments in popular language? He could do none of these. Humiliated, worn out and superfluous he became a sort of a laughing stock for the audience with his nose crooked, his limbs deformed and his jokes stale. He lost his position and possibilities, his power and his freshness. Even before the play began we could know what he was going to say. He had grown too old to say anything new.

\* \* \*

To complete the story of the *Vidūṣaka*, reference will have to be made to his successors. The original *Vidūṣaka* died out. The purpose, however, for which he was originally required in a play remained. This want was filled by some later dramatists of power and originality by creating other characters. It is, however, to the credit of the *Vidūṣaka* that no single character could replace him. Nowhere else could be found that combination of the smiles and the sorrows, of the fun and the freaks of life. In the *MM.* of *Bhavabhūti*, the character of *Kāmandakī* is akin to the earlier *Vidūṣaka*. Like him, she brings the different traits of the hero and the heroine to the notice of the audience, she introduces comic situations and she is a respectable, lady of keen observation and wide experience. There was however, no time for experimenting any further. Sanskrit, as language, had died out long before *Bhavabhūti*. Soon after Sanskrit ceased to be even a fashion.

\* \* \*

The *Vidūṣaka* could thus be said to have been introduced in Sanskrit Drama from the early days. The very nature of the

plot and of the hero required that he, the Vidūšaka, should be a Brahmin busybody, moving in aristocratic circles, where scandal and intrigue are usually rife. With the gradual change in life and manners he was first stereotyped and then taken to pieces where all the active elements were reduced to dull technicalities. In the evolution of Sanskrit Drama itself the character of the Vidūšaka had a place and a function. By the side of the hero, the Vidūšaka is both the Sūtradhāra and the Naṭī. He introduces the story and amuses the audience. Like the viṣkambhaka and the praveśaka, he serves the purpose of informing the audience of the incidents mainly connected with the hero and supposed to have happened during the interval.<sup>5</sup> In this respect, he recalls to our mind the chorus of the Greek plays. The Vidūšaka has stronger affinities to the chorus than has the prastāvanā or the Sūtradhāra. He is the only character who offers the dramatists a most convenient, powerful, and happy chance to moralize. So did the Greek chorus. Above all, it (the chorus) "gave the poet an opportunity of commenting and moralizing upon the progress of the events in the play proper." It should be added that the Vidūšaka, alone in the dramatic world, could boast of "commenting and moralizing on the progress of the events" not only "in the play proper" but in life itself on the whole. Not merely does he instruct us from a height but he does interest and amuse us from our very midst.

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5. Cf. A. Śāk: Opening of Act II.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE STAGE AND THE PRODUCTION OF EARLIER SANSKRIT PLAYS - I

THE MAIN purpose of this and the following chapter is to attempt to get an idea, as far directly from the texts themselves as possible, of how the early sanskrit plays were, if at all, produced on the stage. Our modern study of these sanskrit plays seems to have taken the least notice of this aspect of the plays. We study the author, the text, the technique and characterization and other things ; our study of these aspects, however, would have little or no authority unless we also know the stage-conditions under and for which these plays were written. Without this latter information, our criticism would be incomplete if not misplaced.

India has had a stage from the earliest days. Our first question is if classical plays like those of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa were produced ; and secondly, if they were produced on the traditional popular ( i. e. of the people ) stage.

In the *Pratimā* of Bhāsa ( act I ) there is a reference to actors Nāṭakiya and performance Nāṭak. The actors are asked to get ready with a performance which would suit the occasion (*Kālsamvādinā Nāṭaken*). This performance is to be exhibited, as is evident from the context, within the palace area. Similarly, in *Malavikāgnimitra*, Kālidāsa suggests such theatrical shows in the halls of the palace. It is easy to see from such examples that these classical plays (*Rūpak*) were exhibited to audiences as performances (Nāṭak.) But did these plays have a place on the popular stage ? It is not so easy to say. On the contrary, there are circumstances, at least in the early plays, which lead to a negative answer to our question. The very nature of composition, the exalted poetical style and the types of heroes and heroines—all this tempts us to believe that these classical plays, inspite of all claim to the contrary, were more for an enlightened audience (*Abhirūpbhuyiṣṭa Parishad*, as Kālidāsa says). At the same time, the possibility of these plays being occasionally produced before a mixed common audience and on the popular stage is not entirely ruled out. In the last act of Bhavabhūti's

**Uttara-Rāmacaritam**, Vālmīki's play is produced in the open, on the banks of the Ganges.

How were plays produced in the open? What was the stage like? What were the technique and the equipment of that stage. What were the general conditions under which the public enjoyed such "theatrical" performances?

A complete or a satisfactory answer to the above questions would be too great an ambition to realise with our present study of Sanskrit Drama. There are three sources of aid to answer the above questions: (i) tradition, (ii) works on sanskrit drama like the *Nāṭya-śāstra* (N. S.) and *Daśarūpaka* (D. R.); and, (iii) the texts of the plays themselves. Of these, the least reliable is the second viz. the authority of the technical works. For one thing, the texts, especially of the N. S., are too corrupt; secondly, we are not sure of the dates of the stage about which they write; and, thirdly, some like *Daśrūpaka* are no more than a reconstruction of the stage as suggested by some standard classical plays.

We have therefore to depend entirely on the texts themselves and on tradition.

To begin with, we must remember that even the texts of the plays could not be relied upon too much as an aid. These earlier dramatists did not, as a rule, give all necessary directions. We do not know if the texts, as preserved, are of the play (Rūpaka) or of the performance (Nāṭak). In other words, do the texts represent the literary or the stage version (if such existed) ?

To explain the nature of the difficulty, we shall take an example from one of the earlier plays, viz the *Pratijñā-yaugandharāyana* of Bhāsa. The text tells us that the play is divided into four acts. How was this division maintained on the stage? As a matter of fact, nowhere in any of these acts we are told directly where the scene is laid. In the first act, the main scene is introduced in the following words: *Tataḥ praviśati Yougandharāyanah sālaken saha*. In act II, the words, *tataḥ praviśati rājā saparivārah*: introduce the main scene and from the preceding *pravesaka* we learn only where the king is coming *from* and not where he is going to open the scene. Act III opens with the words, *tataḥ praviśati dindikaveśo vidūśakah* and the last act with *tataḥ pravis iti b'itibh*, in neither case with any indication as to

the place into where the characters appear. Thus the dramatist does not mention the place where the scene is laid. Even such a mention, however, would not be so relevant because from the point of view of the spectators, such intimation by the dramatist in the *written book* would be of no use. In this play, not only Bhāsa does not mention but even the characters concerned, e. g. sūtradhāra in act I or the Kāñcukīya in act II, do not give us the necessary information.

This fact tells us that in some of the earlier plays, the division into acts found in the written form was not satisfactorily maintained on the stage. Let us remember that the earlier performances were not punctuated by the fall and rise of a curtain or any other device to which we are now used. Tradition supports us in this statement. In a traditional popular performance (i. e. a village performance)<sup>1</sup> the stage is a raised platform, open at three sides, and there are no curtains in front and no screens to the sides; and when the performance begins, there is no break either for acts or for an interval. From the entrance of Sūtrādhara to the bharatavākyā the performance proceeds continuously.

Though the performance was thus continuous, the scene, it should be noted, was (and could be) rarely laid in one place throughout the play. In the *Pratijñā-yaugandharāyana* mentioned above, as we learn in other ways, act I describes events in the palace of Vatsarāja and act II, in that of king Mahāsena; the scene in the third act is laid in a temple and that in the last on the public road in front of a tavern and finally in the king's armoury (*āyudhāgāra*). How was this change of scene intimated to the audience? And how, if at all, was it represented on the stage?

We shall take the second question first, since it has a direct bearing on what has been said till now. When we say that the performance was continuous, there is only one obvious answer to how the scenes were represented. *The scenes were not represented at all*; that is to say, there was nothing on the stage to tell or suggest to the audience that it was a palace or a temple or a tavern that it saw there. The very fact that the show went on

<sup>1</sup> A genuine one, not one affected by or in imitation of a town performance.

uninterrupted made it physically impossible to set up any scene. If, at all, the stage had any equipment, either it was there from the very beginning or there was some other device than the setting up of a scene; from the texts we find that there was a crude, device by which intimation of both the scene and the equipment were provided.

I have suggested in another place<sup>2</sup> that in Sanskrit dramas the Viṣhkambhaka, the Praveśaka, the Sūtradhāra, the Vidūṣaka and then the other minor characters were utilised to describe and thus intimate to the audience the scene. Thus in the Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa the Kāñcukīya in act II tells us that we are in the palace-yard of king Mahāsena; in act III, it is the Vidūṣaka who tells us at the opening that we are in the temple-yard and then tells us that the scene shifts to *agni-gṛha*. In the last act it is the soldier who tells us that the scene opens on the road near the tavern and later on intimates that the scene shifts to the armoury. We must note here that apart from this bare intimation, there is nothing (and there could be nothing) on the stage to give the audience any idea of the scene. Everytime the character "sees" (nirūpya) or "acts as seeing" (nātyena nirūpya) and then says, "here is such and such a place." And so the audience too accepts the make-believe.

A study of Sanskrit plays reveals one interesting fact about the stage. For some reason or other, the scenes of Sanskrit plays are, as it were, fixed. Thus the palace, the palace-garden, the palace-terrace, the palace-yard, the king's court, the hermitage, the road and the interior apartment—these exhaust the scenes of almost all sanskrit plays. The Svapnavāsavadattam, for example, opens as Yaugandharāyaṇa tells us in his very first speech, in the hermitage. Then in act II, a female servant (in the opening Praveśaka) tells us that the scene is laid near the bower of Mādhavi creeper. In act III there is no praveśaka or viṣkambhaka. So Vāsavadattā in her opening speech says it is the pramadavana. Similarly, in act IV, since no mention of the scene is made in the praveśaka, the very first sentence of the main scene conveys the required information.

A change of scene is intimated just before the change takes place. The audience thus gets direct information about the next scene. In the meanwhile, how should the audience

2. See chapters IX & X.

know that the previous scene or episode is over? If that information also is not directly given, the audience might either feel a sort of jerk or lose the connexion when thus suddenly informed. It is as important to tell the audience that one scene has ended as to inform that the next has begun. The division into acts is a device to convey this intimation. But, as already explained, that division was for readers and not for spectators; and, in the absence of a drop curtain, the conclusion of one episode had to be intimated in some other form. The earlier sanskrit plays adopted a device which could as well be termed the stage-technique of those days. As a rule, every act ended by a description of noon-time or evening or night or moon-light or some allied topic. With the type of stories selected, this was easy too. In some rare cases where no description was possible, other ways were found which later on were recognised as cūlikā, aīkāsyā or aīkāvatāra where characters either off or on the stage introduced the next episode (i. e. act) at the end of the previous one.<sup>3</sup>

The performance, with the above devices, was continuous. But inspite of this (and as time went on) changes had to be introduced to meet new situations. For one thing, though, as a rule, the stage had no equipment and there was no curtain it seems likely that from the very beginning one or two articles and a kind of an *ad hoc* curtain became fixtures in the stage-technique. The earlier stage, like the village stage, was divided into two equal halves. The front half was open to the sky as well while the back half (the central portion of which was known as the Rangaśīrṣa) had some kind of a covering at the top. It was in the Rangaśīrṣa that some kind of a seat<sup>4</sup> (usually reserved for the hero, heroine or king or queen) was kept throughout. This served as a throne in the court-scene or a stone slab (śhilāpaṭṭaka) in the garden scene or a chariot etc. when, however, a character entered as seated (e. g.

3. Cf. Mudrārākṣasa. End of act I refers to Rākṣasa with whom next act is concerned.

Cf. Mudrārākṣasa. End of act II refers to Cāṇakya with whom next act is concerned.

Also Cf. Daśarūpaka I 61-62

4. In case extra seats were required they were brought in for the occasion Cf. Mālav. act. I when the King asks the two teachers to take their seats the direction says Ubhau parijanopani taylorāsanyoah upavīṣṭau.

in act I of *Svapnavāsavdattā*, *tataḥ praviśati upaviṣṭā tāpasi*, a piece of cloth was held up to screen the arrival and the seating. This could be done because to the right (left of the audience) of the *Rangaśirṣa* was the *Sūtradhāra* with his band of musicians and to the left was the *Vidūṣaka* or some other concerned with the stage-management. (Usually servant rôles). Along with the seat, a few branches or flowers or twigs could be kept in the *Rangaśirṣa* if the play had such a scene. When during the course of the play, another character of high status appeared there was no other seat. So the Sanskrit dramatist always used a sentence like *idamāsanam, upaviśyatām* saying which the servant would bring another seat. Some times, this later character would make his exit along with his temporary seat!

It is interesting in this connexion to note what the *Nāṭyaśāstra* has to say. Drama is the imitation of life. That, according to Bharata, means that in a dramatic representation things should be imitated and not actually put on the stage.

Prāsāda gṛhayānāni nāṭyopakaraṇāni ca  
 Na śakyāni tathā kartum yathoktamiḥa laksāṇaiḥ  
 Lokadharmi bhavetvanyā nāṭyadharmi tathāparā  
 Svabhāvo lokadharmi tu nāṭyadharmi vikārataḥ  
 ( XXIII 191-3 ). (41)

As a matter of fact, talking of equipping the stage with scenes, the author says :

Nāsmākam sammatā nāṭye gurutvāt khedadā hi sa  
 ( XXIII 190 b ) (42)

The author goes further and says that such things as mountains, seasons, rain, lightening etc. should be represented not by models or effects but by the bodily or facial gestures of the actor.

( XXVI 27 ff )

Finally, reference may be made to another circumstance that did not encourage stage-technique. In the early days whether in the palace-hall or in the open at a festival meeting ( *Yātrā* ), a play was performed not during the dark hours of the night but either during the morning hours or late in the evening ( but before night fall )<sup>5</sup>.

5. Cf. *Nāṭya-śāstra* XXVII 87 ff.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE STAGE AND THE PRODUCTION OF SANSKRIT PLAYS-II

IT IS unfortunate that works like the *Nāṭya-Śāstra* and *Daśarūpaka* etc. which deal with dramas and dramaturgies cannot be relied upon as far as the historical aspect is concerned. On the one hand, they are centuries later than the plays of *Bhāsa* and others and, on the other, they are concerned more with the literary form of a drama. It was seen in the last chapter that earlier plays were produced under certain conditions and that these books on dramaturgy do not offer much help for the study of those conditions. This is much more so when we come to study the plays of *Kālidāsa*, *Bhavabhūti* and *Shri Harṣa* as well as plays like the *Mṛchhakaṭikam* and the *Mudrārākṣasam*.

Let us take the example of the *Mṛchhakaṭikam* of *Śūdraka*. This is one of the few classical plays that has retained its freshness and its appeal even to this day — so much so that not only in almost all the Indian languages but even in many other languages of advanced foreign countries this play is being produced with success. As far as the Indian language versions are concerned, the play has been unhesitatingly adapted to the usual stage-form of scenes and curtains and no attempt has been made to study the technique of the original; nor has any attempt been made to find out how the original play was produced in the early days. Perhaps this is the only play which, in the interest of dramatic action, has boldly disregarded every rule of convention and convenience. However, it will be found out that "convention and convenience" refer to what we understand by those terms now and not what the ancient stage had to show.

The play *Mṛchhakaṭikam* opens, like many other Sanskrit plays, with the *Sūtradhāra*. Till the exit of the *Sūtradhāra* (and the *Naṭī*) the play does not commence and so the laying of the scene is not relevant. In this play, the *Sūtradhāra* sees the *Vidūṣaka* at a distance (off) and invites him for a ceremony. The *Vidūṣaka* (still off) refuses that invitation and finally the *Sūtradhāra* exits. Then only the *Vidūṣaka* enters. From his first soliloquy we come to know that the *Vidūṣaka* has approached *Cārudatta*'s house; actually the outer door

leading to an open court-yard is supposed to be on the stage. Not only that even part of the open court-yard is on the stage since later Cārudatta is found there offering his worship to the deities. This is confirmed later when Vasantasenā enters followed by Śakāra and his retinue. With an intention of slipping away from her tormentors this is, in the author's words what she does :

( Nātyena nūpuramūtsārya mālyāni cāpanīya kimcit pari-  
kramya hastena parāmrūṣya )

Ammo bhittiparā marisasuidam pakkhaduāram khu edam  
Jāṇāmi a samjoeṇa gehassa samvudam pakkhduāram (43)

( ' by gestures, she removes her anklets and wreaths, steps round, feels with her hand '—and says ) ' Oh ! I can feel a door in the wall. I find that the door of the house is closed ' . This is an interesting fact indeed. She makes us realise that on the stage is a wall with a closed door and she is outside and the author, in what follows, shows us the other side of the wall. But Vasantasenā not only says all that in so many words but explains it by gestures. In other words, the stage-direction and Vasantasenā's speech lead us to believe in the existence on the stage of a setting as described by her. But the detailed description, the gestures and the *parikramana* also make us realise that actually on the stage there was nothing physically seen that represented the setting of the scene accordingly. But this is not all. The stage that the audience of those days could visualise was, and could be, as wide as the actions or episodes or movements required. For, at the end of the act Cārudatta accompanies Vasantasenā, by *parikramana*, as far as the latter's home and seeing her enter into its safety walks back along the public road. The peculiarity of this play is that in almost every act the dramatist represents on the stage two locations one clearly distinguished from the other.

As a matter of fact, in almost all Sanskrit plays, such is the stage-setting though the actions in the Mṛchhakaṭika are such as to draw our attention more emphatically than other plays to this fact.

The opening act of *Mudrārākṣasa*, to take another example, expects us to visualise a similar setting on the stage. After the

exit of Sūtradhāra, Cāṇakya enters. Apparently it is his own house because later on he sits on a seat. And then a spy enters with *yamapaṭa* ( a magic-glass ). The spy is outside the house and, after a while, says: *yāvadetad gr̥ham ( praviṣya. yamapatam daśayan )* there is the house ( enters it to show the *yamapaṭa* ). Similarly in the same play act III, we find the chamberlain in the precincts of the palace; the king's entry is in another part of the palace; then both of them walk up to a terrace ( *Sugañgaprāsādam natyen āruhya* ). This is not all; the credulity of the audience is tried still further, because in the same act, Cāṇakya is shown in his own house, later the chamberlain walks from terrace to Cāṇakya's house and brings the latter to the royal audience ! It should be remembered that when Cāṇakya's entry is announced in the midst of the act he is found seated ! The same seat is used by Cāṇakya later when he is requested by the king to be seated ! Similar movements are represented in act V where Malayaketu is in his tent, Rākṣasa in his own house and then the two meet in the former's tent.

Finally, the stage-setting of one of Kālidāsa's plays may be studied from this point of view. In the very first act, after the exit of the Sūtradhāra, King Duṣyanta, seated in his chariot with a charioteer, enters *chasing* a deer. For a few minutes the horses are given free rein and the chariot has now entered a hermitage. Later on the king wanders about and approaches a cluster of trees where the three girls 'enter' watering the plants. Similarly, in act IV the scene moves on from place to place within the hermitage and in act V within the palace.

It may be seen from such examples that the stage on which a Sanskrit play was performed was taken to be flexible enough to accommodate any place, any distance, and any episode. Change of location was conveyed to the audience in so many actual words—and oftentimes, by gestures. In act IV of the *Abhijñāna-Śākuntalam*, the scene opens in a kind of flower-garden. This is conveyed by the dramatist in his opening stage direction ' *Tataḥ praviṣataḥ kusumāvacayam abhinayantyau sakhyau*' 'then enter Śākuntala's two girl-friends picking flowers.' Later one of the girls, Priyamvadā, says :

Sakhi, avacitāni khalu balikāmaparyāptāni kusumāni

'we have gathered sufficient flowers for the rite'. The audience, in this way, is further reminded where the scene is laid. In act I when the King wants the horses to be given free rein the charioteer, saying yes, describes in so many words the speed of the horses, after first 'suggesting the speed' (*rathavegam nirūpya*) probably by an appropriate gesture. Even when the King gets ready to shoot his arrow, the dramatist simply tells us—*Rājā śarsandhānam nāṭayati*, the King acts i. e., shows by gestures stringing the arrow to his bow. In act VI, at the end, the King is actually supposed to climb to the top floor of the Meghapraticchhanda palace and, what is more interesting, he has actually climbed before our very eyes.

It is thus clear that early Sanskrit plays were represented on a stage which was practically bare of anything of the type of equipment and material that we associate with a production of modern days. Perhaps, whatever was considered appropriate or suitable for purposes of house or room decoration may have been there as e. g. flower-pots or floor-carpets etc. But, there was neither any property nor any setting on the stage nor was the change of scene within an act shown by the help of a curtain. It has been already mentioned that there was no curtain at all, nor was there any proscenium. As has been suggested in other places, the theatre which was variously called as *nāṭyaveshman* or *nāṭyamandapa* or *prekhāgṛha* was, more than often even within the palaces, not a place closed-in by walls or four sides; the time of performance (called *prékṣā* in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*) was morning or evening or early night according to the type of the play. If it were evening or early night torch-lights were used for the stage and none for the auditorium, since this latter was open to the sky. Characters, only in particular types of plays, were made up in appropriate dress. Whatever could not be represented on the stage but was necessary for the audience to know was described by the characters themselves. If the information was significant to the story or the episode then the characters, by physical gestures, reminded the audience of such details. Thus in act VI of Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhavam*, Mādhava and his friend are waiting inside a temple. Mālatī comes there in a bridal procession which they witness through an open lattice and finally Mālatī enters the temple and

Mādhava conceals himself behind the pillar and so on. However, neither the temple nor the processional effects are shown on the stage though both are referred to and described in actual words.

As far as the stage was concerned, it would be said without hesitation that much was left to the imagination of the audience. At the same time certain devices must have come to stay due to time and convenience. One of them is the convenient division of the stage into two or three sections so that events separated by time or distance could just be indicated as such. In the absence of authoritative details or representative pictures, it would not be so easy to reconstruct the stage of those days. But it may be safely mentioned that the choice of a place to stage a play was as important a rite as the choice of a place for a sacrificial alter. In the last act of Bhavabhūti's *Uttarārāmacaritam* the sage Vālmīki has arranged for a dramatic performance on the bank of the river *Gangā*. Lakṣmaṇa mentions that he has been ordered to improvise a *samāja-sannivesa* on the bank of the river *Gangā*. The commentator throws an interesting light on this by writing — *Sītāyā gangājalādudgamansaukaryāya gangātīrasya rāngatvakalpanam*, 'the bank of the river *Gangā* was selected as the site for the show so as to facilitate the entry of *Sītā* out through the waters of *Gangā*!' That explains to us one of the chief reasons of the plays being staged in the palace-gardens or the court-yards of temples. There is an unusual word by which Lakṣmaṇa refers to the stage : *Gangātīramātodyasthānam upagamya kriyatām samājsannivesh*, 'the *sannivesa* or the assembling of the *Samāja* (audience) at the *ātodyasthāna*. Literally, this last word means 'a place where musical instruments are kept'. Here, that word has been used to denote a stage or a *ranga*. It has been suggested earlier that music and dance had a definite place in the Sanskrit dramas and were mostly used at the beginning or in the prologue of a play. *Naṭī* is the one character that sings or dances. This would suggest that the *ātodyasthāna* is that part of the stage which *Sūtradhāra* and *Naṭī* occupy throughout the performance except when they have to play, as in the *Mālatīmādhavam* of Bhavabhūti, some other rôle (*Sūtradhāra* in this play assumes the role of *Kāmandakī*). The *ātodyasthāna*, was usually at the left of the audience. From the *ātodyasthāna*, proceeding rightwards (of the audi-

ence) the front part of the stage was known as the *ranga*; the remaining portion, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was the *rangasirṣa*. The part of the stage behind the *ātodyasthāna* was the *nepathyagṛha*. The play, for the greater part, took place in the *ranga*. Between the *ranga* and the *rangasirṣa* the change was always shown by the temporary use of a cloth as a curtain. For example, in the third act of *Mūdrārāksasa* the king, supposed to be on the terrace, is in the *ranga*. Then the cloth is held up and behind it Cāṇakya takes his seat and then the cloth removed. When he comes to the king and the king asks him to sit on the same seat on which he was sitting at home is used now as his seat in the palace, only now that the cloth curtain is no longer there the entire stage represents one location.

The Sanskrit play, as indicated earlier, was a continuous performance without any break at all; and, since there was no proscenium, there was no front curtain either. As a matter of fact the very idea of separating the stage and the performers from the audience was abhorrent to the tradition of Indian (and Sanskrit) drama. Like the *Samvāhaka* in the *Mrichhakaṭikam* of Śūdraka, characters oftentimes directly addressed the audience. In the prologue, of course, the *Sūtradhāra* directly addresses and refers to the 'august assembly of discerning learned men'. Minor characters like the *Vidūṣaka* could carry on a *harangue* with the audience. In the last act of Bhavabhūti's *Uttarārāmacaritam* the fact that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa try to speak with or about Sīta on the stage is interesting, from this point of view. From the days the *Kuśilavas* sang ballads and acted the dialogues, this contact between the actors and their audience had been established.

So, with no curtain for the act or the scene, the performance was continuous upto the end. The division into acts in the written plays was to denote a particular stage in the development of the story. Since Sanskrit plays did not observe any of the unities accepted as essential to plays in the West, the continuity of the story and the connection between changes in scenes or the passage of time had to be intimated to the audience. This was done by the five technical devices referred to in the preceding chapters viz., *viṣkambhaka*, *praveśaka*, *cūlikā* *āṅkāṣya* and *āṅkāvatāra*. It would not be out of place to

mention here the definitions of these five devices as accepted by the authorities on Dramaturgy.<sup>1</sup>

*viṣkambhaka and pravesaka*

Vṛtta vartiyamāṇānām kathāmśānām nidarśakah  
 samkhṣepārthastu viṣkambho madhyapātraprayojitah  
 Tadvadevānudāttoktyā nīcapātraprayojitah  
 Praveśoankdvayasyāntah śeṣārthasyopasūcakah (44)

These two, broadly speaking, are very short scenes between minor characters and their main purpose is to describe what has happened and also to relate what is to come next. The viṣkambhaka scene can occur at the beginning of act I as well but the other i. e., the pravesaka should occur only between two acts.

*cūlikā*

antaryavanikāsamsthācūlikārthsyā sucanā (45)

In the cūlikā no character appears on the stage but from behind the 'curtain' narrates the (intervening) episode.

*aṅkāsyā*

aṅkāntapātrairāṅkāsyam bhinnāaṅksyārthasucanāt (46)

The same character that ends the preceding act continues the following act. (e. g. 'Let us go to the palace' may be that last sentence of an act and the same character would begin the next act by saying 'Here, we have come to the palace').

*aṅkāvatāra*

aṅkāvatārastvankānte patoankasyāvibhāgataḥ (47)

Here it would be the episode that would keep up the continuity. In the Mālavikāgnimitra of Kālidāsa Vidūṣaka tells the teachers to keep ready and start the music. Music is heard from the distance and the act ends and then act II opens in the Saṅgītaśalā where the music is being played.

The stage of the Sanskrit dramas, as could be seen from the foregoing, was a simple one. Though tradition classified drama as *dṛṣya kāvya* (visual poetry) and Kālidāsa himself was

1 D. R. I 59-62.

eloquent enough to refer to a play as a beautiful ceremony for the eyes ( *kāntam kratum cākṣuṣam* ) there was little to be seen and more to be heard and understood and appreciated. By 'visual poetry' it was only intended to suggest that drama, unlike other forms of literature, is to be read by other persons. These other persons, naturally, had to identify themselves with the story and its characters and it was just that 'impersonation' ( *āropa* as suggested by D. R. I-7-*Rūpakam tatsamāropāt* ) that was to be seen so that the story could be believed and better appreciated.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THE STAGE AND PRODUCTION OF SANSKRIT PLAYS (Traditional)

EARLIER IN this book, in chapter III, the traditional story of the origin of drama has been narrated. Books on dramaturgy in Sanskrit vie with each other in giving drama hoary tradition. Inspite of Bharata proudly asserting that drama was the fifth Veda accessible to the 'high and low' alike and that it was more of an education through entertainment, the performance of a drama, in tradition, has been surrounded with a number of rites and rituals. That was as it should be since, inspite of Bharata's pleading,<sup>1</sup> the four Vedas had each contributed their best for Drama. So from the very first performance in which the demons created disturbance a ceremonial rite at the beginning was prescribed not only in praise of Gods but to pacify mischievous elements. With reference to another book on dramaturgy, viz., the *Daśarūpaka*, we shall see here how, according to tradition, a drama was to be performed.<sup>2</sup>

The very first performance was 'on a festival day—the day called 'Indra-dhwaja-maha'. Since Indra is also, among other things, the presiding and controlling deity of rain and winds, it may be assumed that sometime in the summer he was worshipped so that he could sanction good and sufficient rains. So traditionally a dramatic performance was fixed during a summer festival, either in the *vasanta* (spring) or the *grisma* season. In the prologue of almost any Sanskrit play this fact is mentioned by the *Sūtradhāra*. Due to the 'festival, an audience in the proper mood was assured. Performances within the palace-yards were less usual and they too were given only on occasions of joy. Once a performance was decided the *Sūtradhāra* (who was a kind of a manager, a director and a producer rolled into one) would get busy with constructing a stage. This could be one of the three types *Vikṛsta* (with the audience on two sides), *tryasra* (with the audience on three sides) and ' *caturasra* (with the audience on four sides). It is not clear whether the exigencies of the available space or the type of the play or the number of

1. N. S. I 102-118.

2. Cf. D. R. III.

the audience decided the type of the *nātyavesman* (theatre, also called *nātyamaṇḍapa* and *preksāgṛha*). Since all the shows were in the open and also open to all freely the *Sūtradhāra* had to worry only about the theatre and the performance. Then before the performance commenced the stage was worshipped (*raṅgapūjā*). This was, so to say, a domestic affair i. e., the audience was in no way concerned with it. But was it performed in full view of the audience? Apparently it was, since the stage or the 'green-room' were not curtained off. However, whenever plays were performed in temple-yards (as they mostly were) it could be assumed that the 'green-room' and the worship were 'off' the audience. It was the opening verse called *nāndī* that was recited during the *pūjā* and as, gradually, the dramatist, and not the *Sūtradhāra*, contributed this verse its recitation must have been addressed to the audience. And in the course of time, the worship must have taken place within the full view of the audience and with the personal participation of the *Sūtradhāra*. So the *Daśarūpaka* says that after the *raṅgapūjā* the *Sūtradhāra* must leave the stage.

pūrvvaraṅgam vidhāyādau sūtradhāre vinirgate  
pravīśya tadvadaparah kāvyamāsthāpayennataḥ (48)

'After the *pūrvvaraṅga* the *Sūtradhāra* exits; then an actor, similar to him, should come on the stage and introduce the play'. As we see in Sanskrit plays no other actor 'similar to the *Sūtradhāra*' appears on the stage; on the other hand, the *Sūtradhāra* himself tells us that the *pūjā* (worship) is over and that he is now ready to give the performance. Apparently, the author of the *Daśarūpaka* was keen to point out that during the *pūjā* the *Sūtradhāra* was not a *Sūtradhāra* to the audience as they understood that character.

'The introduction of the play' is an interesting feature of Sanskrit plays. To begin with the audience must be flattered and humoured. This *raṅga-prasāda*, as the *Daśarūpaka* calls it, is according to these authorities very essential. It could be easily seen why. No performance could be enjoyed or appreciated unless the audience is in a proper mood. Bharata, the author of the *Nātyaśāstra*, even goes out of his way to emphasise this point. When the sages ask him why music and dance have to be employed in a dramatic performance when

they are not connected with it he says it is a necessary diversion (*vinoda*) and it adds colour (*sobham janayati*). But he also insists that since the drama is the most important thing music and dance should not be overdone. The author of *Daśarūpaka* also says dance and music are *nāṭakādyupakāraka* (I-10) i. e., they only add effect to and do not constitute drama.

So the *Sūtradhāra* directly addresses the audience and informs them of the special festive context and of his 'being commanded' by the public to entertain them by a good dramatic performance and then asks *nāṭī* ( his female companion ) to sing and dance in celebration of the season. He has already informed his audience of the names of the author and the play. And then invariably he asks her if all preparations have been satisfactorily completed.

It is unfortunate that these works on dramaturgy do not give us any more information relevant to the actual production of the play. There is more about the play from the dramatist's point of view and more about acting from the actor's point of view. But there is practically no information about how to put a play on the stage except what could be read between the lines.

The introduction of the story of the play, for example, is described in details. It is true that most of this is based on the actual study of available plays. Nevertheless since this information is given in the context of the 'prologue' ( for which *Sūtradhāra* is responsible ) we may see it with advantage. The *Sūtradhāra*, after praising the audience and putting them into an expansive mood, should introduce the story. But how? These authorities are very particular in pointing out that the introduction must be both dramatic and interesting; it should not be straight and prosaic : either through a dialogue or situation leading to the story, or through a character picking up *Sūtradhāra*'s words in the context of the plot, or through a comic situation and so on. The scrupulousness with which the divisions and sub-divisions of these devices are enumerated only emphasises the importance of an effective and appropriate introduction. The *Sūtradhāra* almost always introduces the first character of the play before it enters. But

whether he introduces the story or the character he should see that only that which is 'proper and consistent' is introduced ( III 24-25 ). It is the duty of the Sūtradhāra to see that when he selects whatever is proper and consistent he does not fail to connect them by appropriate and informative interludes ( called *viskambhaka* and *pravetaka* ). But these also must be interesting, says the author :

apekṣitam parityaja nirasam vastuvistaram  
yadā samdarśayecheśam kuryādvīṣkambhakam tadā  
( III 28-29 ) ( 49 )

And finally, even if the author has them in his play, the Sūtradhāra should see that certain things are not shown on the stage, e. g., killing, war, natural calamities, eating, bathing, dressing etc. And when an act is supposed to be over, the characters on the stage, one or more, should make an exit ( III-37 ).

A dramatic performance, in tradition, was meant to be mainly a pleasant diversion. That, however did not mean that unpleasant or sorrowful or dull happenings could not be treated as subjects for a play. The author of *Daśarūpaka* is very explicit on this when he says :—

Ramyam jugupsitam ūdaramathāpi nīcam  
Ugram prasādi gahanam vikṛtam ca vastu  
Yadvāpyavastu kavibhāvakabhāvyamānam

Tannāsti yanna rasabbāvmupaiti loke ( IV-85 ) ( 50 )

Beautiful or ugly, noble or mean, frightful or pleasing, simple or subtle, there is no such thing that could not be turned into a subject of enjoyable literature.

CHAPTER XIV  
EARLY PLAYS  
( Bhāsa ),

IN THE foregoing chapters we have described, with relevant details, some of the earliest features viz., the Sūtradhāra, the prastāvanā, the Vidūṣaka etc. in the development of Sanskrit Drama. We shall now turn to the study of some of the earliest plays themselves. The task here is more difficult. Chronology is the one stumbling block in the course of the history of Sanskrit literature. It is unfortunate indeed that a literature that can boast of great thinkers like the authors of the Upaniṣads, of great story-tellers like the authors of the two epics and of inspired poets like Kālidāsa, should leave in its trail no information at all as to the time and life of these accomplished writers. In spite of the honest and laborious research work of the Western as well as of the Eastern scholars we are still groping in the dark region of "probabilities." The meagreness of the material data, too, has been responsible, to an extent, for the mischief of fanciful imagination or of prejudiced dogmatism.

Nor is this all. Though we know nothing, for example, of the personal history of Kālidāsa, we are fortunate enough to know that he is the undisputed author of the great play—the Abhijñāna śākuntalam; though we cannot say definitely when and where Pāṇini lived, we know this much for certain that there is no one else to challenge his authorship of the first systematic grammar of the world. These writers are fortunate indeed when compared to certain others who are sometimes denied even the credit of authorship.

One of such latter is the dramatist Bhāsa. That there was a dramatist named Bhāsa is undoubtedly. That he was a great dramatist is equally undoubtedly on the evidence of Kālidāsa's Mālav. mentioned already. From Bāṇa (7th century A. D.) and Rājaśekhara (11th century A. D.) we know that Bhāsa was a well recognised dramatist. But it was only quite recently that Mahāmahopādhyāya T. Ganapati Sastri published, in the Trivendrum Sanskrit Series, some thirteen plays which he ascribed to Bhāsa. These plays should give us an idea of the early Sanskrit stage provided they are the works of Bhāsa referred to

by Kālidāsa and others. Unfortunately Bhāsa's authorship is not unchallenged. At present, there are three views on this question :

- (1) the one that insists that all the plays are the works of Bhāsa.
- (2) the second that insists as vigorously that none of the thirteen plays could be ascribed to Bhāsa, and
- (3) the third that insists on not insisting either way, i. e. which believes in a careful and a compromising study.

The Editor of the T. S. S. was an ardent advocate of the first view. In his introduction he has shown certain "peculiar" features as common to all the thirteen plays and has based his conclusion on these. The features referred to are as follows :—

- (a) all the plays open with the same stage direction —nānyante tataḥ praviśati sūtradhāraḥ : "after the benedictory verse enter the Sūtradhāra.",
- (b) the prologue, in all the thirteen plays, is called Sthāpanā and not Prastāvanā,
- (c) usually, in all the later classical Sanskrit plays the dramatist mentions in the prologue his name, fame etc, (cf. the plays of Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, Viśākhadatta, Śūdraka, Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa etc.). But all these thirteen plays agree in the fact that there is, in the prologues, no mention at all of the author etc.,
- (d) the *bharata-vākyā* ends everywhere with the prayer " May the migh'y King rule over the whole earth." (imām api mahīm kṛtsnām rājasimhaḥ praśāstu naḥ ),
- (e) a structural similarity obtains in some of the plays; e. g. in the opening verse the names of the characters are interwoven, a figure of speech technically called the *mudrālamkāra*, and
- (f) there are deviations from the rules of Bharata and Pāṇini.

It is not within the scope of the present work to discuss the above points and their implications. One thing is certain viz. the style of all these plays shows that they are essentially meant

to be represented on the stage. The *nāndī* verse ( see point (a) above ) belongs more to the actors than to the author. It is part of the stage-worship by the actors. The opening verse of a play is the author's and hence it cannot be said to be a *nāndī*. In the case of the opening verse, therefore, " the definition a *nāndī* does not apply " says Viśwanātha. " So we find ( in a play like the *Vik.* ), that some older manuscripts read the first verse after the stage direction ' nāndyante ' i. e. after the *nāndī*. "<sup>1</sup> It is only an illustration to show that the six features which the Mahāmahopādhyāya finds peculiar are either insignificant or not to be found in each and every play, nor are they usually to be found all in one and the same play.

On the other hand, there are some obvious grounds to believe that the authorship of these plays belongs to more than one person. In the first place, the *S. V.*, the *P. Y.*, the *P. R.*, and the *Prat.* are the only plays that show all the six " peculiar " features described above. Secondly, these four plays can be distinguished from the remaining nine on the ground of the preponderating number of śloka verses in the former.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, may be mentioned the fact viz., that characterisation in these two groups is of such a different nature as to warrant different authorship. The *Prat.* and the *Abhi.*, for example, are both based on the Rāmāyaṇa story, and yet there is a significant difference in two plays with reference to Rāma's character. In the *Prat.* Rāma is great because he is an ideal son, an ideal brother and an ideal husband. All his actions and thoughts are such as are within the sphere of mortal activity. In the *Abhi.*, on the other hand Rāma is God incarnate. In a number of places he is mentioned as such. In Act I Sugrīva addresses Rāma as " deva, —God ! " (I-8); Rāma is Śrīdhara; he is the Lord Madhusūdana himself, irrespective of anachronism (prabhur vā madhusūdanah I-32); he is the Lord of the Universe ( bhuvanaikanātha III-21 ), Lord of men ( nr̥deva, III-27 ), Lord ( deva, IV, 13-14 ) Puruṣot-

1. evam ādiśu nāndī-�क्षणायोगात्. ata eva prāktana-pustakeṣu " nāndyante sūtradhāraḥ " ityanantaram eva " vedānteṣu " ityādi śloka-lekhanam dṛṣyate. (S. D. p. 28). (51)

2. For a further analysis of these plays see the present writer's contributions to the Indian Antiquary, Vol. LX. 1931 pp. 41-45 and the Bulletin of the Sanskrit Literary Association, Karnatak College, Dharwar for the year 1930-31.

tama ( VI, 27-28 ) and finally he is completely identified with Viṣṇu ( viṣṇur bhavān, VI 30-31 ). Likewise a contrast could be observed between the P. R. on the one hand and the M. V., the D. V., the D. G., the K. B., and the U. B. on the other. ( All these six are based on the Mahābhārata episode ). Kṛṣṇa is a divinity *par excellence* in the last five plays. In the D. V. he is identified with Viṣṇu and the four divine weapons, personified, are introduced on the stage. In the D. G., Kṛṣṇa is Lord Nārāyaṇa. In the U. B. Duryodhana of all—he who had thousand and one grievances against Kṛṣṇa—declares in his dying breath that in being killed by Kṛṣṇa he was killed by "Hari, the beloved (Lord) of the World" ( jagataḥ priyeṇa harinā 35 ). The Bāl. is full of miracles from the very beginning. Lastly may be mentioned an important technical difference between the two groups. The Prologue is called Sthāpanā in the four plays of the first group. Of the second group the K. B. has the words ' iti prastāvanā ' instead of ' iti sthāpanā ' ; the D. G. in the opening verse, uses the word " prastāvanā " in connection with a nāṭaka and the Sūtradhāra. " May the Lord who is the sūtradhāra that introduces and develops the eternal drama of the three worlds protect us. "<sup>3</sup> From such references would it be too much to infer that the two groups are not only not the works of one and the same author but that they belong to two entirely different times, the first group being earlier and the second ( wherein are to be found elements like the prastāvanā, the deification etc. ) later ? It was shown above how the Sūtradhāra was the earlier and the prastāvanā a later technical element in the development of Sanskrit Drama. In that case we can reasonably believe that the four plays of the first group belong to a period much earlier than that of the remaining nine. Though, among the thirteen plays, we find some earlier and some later, we can reasonably believe that all the thirteen belong to the earliest period in the history of Sanskrit Drama. ( Those attributed to Aśwaghoṣa might be earlier still, but as they are not available except in fragments, they do not much affect the present statement. ) It is for this reason that we find among the thirteen plays certain deviations from the rules of both Pāṇini and Bharata. The N. S. is an elaborate treatise, which presumes a sufficiently

3. loka-trayā-virata-nāṭaka-vastu-tantra-  
prastāvana-pratisamāpana-sūtradhāraḥ.

developed stage. It would be unreasonable, therefore, to expect the earliest plays to accord with the rules of later treatises !

There is another circumstance which speaks of the antiquity of the plays under consideration; it is the style and the treatment. In none of these plays do we find a highly artistic development. It is, as in the case of the epics, the story of narration that is more interesting than the art of narration. Nay, the fact that most of the plays treat of the epic episodes would tempt one to believe that these plays drew inspiration directly from the epics. The popularity of the employment of the epic metre strengthens still more such a belief. We have seen already how Sanskrit Drama owes its origin to the epic recitation. In the face of such circumstances would it not be reasonable to hold that these plays, based so essentially as they are on the epic style and subject-matter, represent, almost certainly, the earliest stage of Sanskrit Drama ? Even those deviations from the rules of Pāṇini, could then be reasonably understandable—since the plays must have been written in the popular style of the epics. It is interesting to note in this connection that in the K. B. one MS. reads *kavacñkam samāptam* (thus ends the Armour Act) instead of *karṇa-bhāram avasitam* (thus ends the play *karṇa-bhāra*). Similarly, three out of the five MSS. of the Abhi. read *sri rāmāyanām samāptam* (thus ends the holy *Rāmāyaṇa*) instead of *abhiṣekanāṭakam samāptam* (thus ends the play *Abhiṣeka*). All these facts justify one to conclude that there must have been an attempt to dramatize the epic episodes. Similar attempts might have been made with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, though we have only the Prat. and the Abhi (which, be it noted, cover between themselves the whole *Rāma* story).<sup>4</sup> Such a tendency is easily understandable. From the very beginning the epics had attained an unparalleled popularity. Even in modern India the recitation of the two epics is carried on with sanctimonious regularity. If we bear in mind that the form of narration in the epics, especially in the *Mbh.*, is predominantly that of dialogues, we should not be surprised at the attempts to dramatize the episodes therein. The task was not

4. The story of *Rāma* is to be found even in the *Mahābhārata* (III). As a matter of fact the Abhi. ending with the coronation of *Rāma*, covers the entire story as narrated in the *Mbh.* The abandonment of *Sītā* etc. are not to be found in the *Rāma* story of the *Mbh.*

only tempting and inspiring but an easy one. The earliest dramas are thus merely the first attempts of the sūta to popularise the epics by representing their themes on the stage. It is somewhat interesting to note that a legend speaks of Bhāsa as a dhāvaka i.e. a man of lower social status. Bhāsa might not have been an actual sūta of the epic traditions but he might have been of a sufficiently low origin, and further, sufficiently qualified to continue the sūta-tradition of popularising the epics. Unless we take these plays as the earliest attempts in this direction, we cannot satisfactorily explain defects in technique like disregard of time or place side by side with poetry of a high quality. Drama as such was still in its infancy. We find herein more of the epic style of narration than that of artistic arrangement. In plays like the M. V., the D. G., the U. B., the Bāl. etc. there are fights on the stage which are half-artistic. In the Bāl. (III) we have a reference to dance ( *hallīśaka* ) and music ( *ātodya* ). In the same play ( V ) there is boxing of Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika. In the U. B. ( 9 ) we read :

cārīm gatim pracarati praharatyabhīkṣṇam  
samsikṣito narapatir balavānstu bhīmaḥ (51)

“ The King ( i e. Duryodhana ) is graceful in his steps and quicker on the weapon; he is trained fighter; but Bhīma has more of physical strength ”

The words *cārī* ( a dance-step ) and *samsikṣita* ( trained ) show that dancing, as an art, had found a place in dramatic representation. Bharata is not so unreasonable when he says that the first performance was a *samavakāra* representing the fight of the Gods with the demons. The brilliant device of introducing dance on the stage as in Kālidāsa's Māl. has here its crude beginnings.

CHAPTER XV  
MAIN TENDENCIES  
(A) *Social Conditions.*

IN THE last chapter an attempt was made to show that the thirteen plays ascribed to Bhāsa belonged to the earliest period in the history of Sanskrit dramatic literature. Whether all thirteen are, or are not, written by Bhāsa, is immaterial for the present purpose viz. to find out the relation of these plays to contemporary social life. Since no one date is, universally or with certainty, accepted, it is better to view the question from another point of view i.e. to find out the social conditions as reflected in the thirteen plays.

Could we presume, in the first place, that a dramatist does necessarily represent contemporary social life and manners? Does he represent the world as it is or as he finds it or as he would like to find it? Though it is difficult to answer these questions, it might be asserted, in the present context, that a good dramatist could not avoid depicting the tendencies, if not the tangibilities, of his times. It is more in the details and development than in the plot or presentation proper that one could reasonably detect the social and cultural background of the dramatist.

From such a point of view, the society represented in these thirteen plays seems to be comparatively a primitive one. The conception of society as such, as we have it now, is still not to be found. It is the family, the group of blood-relationship that is recognised in a sort of social aspect. Family, forming the one group of co-operation, is idealised. The sanctity and the claims and the traditions of family come above all. Each and every member of the family owes allegiance to the family. It is his bounden duty to respect and preserve the family tradition. The thirteen plays under discussion are scrupulous and unanimous in this respect. In the P. R., for example, a family is said to be ruined even if an individual member misbehaves. "A man with no character burns away his family" (1-12): Members of a family will have to run away if one of them loses character (I-12). In the Prat., when Rāma, the legitimate heir to the throne, is duly crowned his brother Satrughna says "By this

coronation of my elder brother, the stain on our family is wiped out" (VII-13). Similarly, in the Abhi. Vāli, the monkey-chief, entreats from his death-bed that his brother Sugrīva should continue the traditions of his family.

vimucya roṣam parigṛhya dharmam  
kula-pravālam parigṛhyatām nah.<sup>1</sup> (52)

" Give up your anger and take up, according to Dharma, our family traditions. "

In the same play, Sītā prays that her husband be victorious if she has never violated the high family traditions.<sup>2</sup>

With this attitude towards the family it is no surprise if blood-relationship is held in high sanctity. Members of a family are always believed to be identical not only in conduct and character but even in the details of their physical features. Instances, even at random, might be multiplied. Remarks like *aho svara-sādṛṣyam—aho rūpa-sādṛṣyam*—Oh! what a resemblance of voice! of form and figure! etc. are strewn over. Oftentimes they seem quite far-fetched and ridiculous. Thus in the Prat. (IV) Sītā goes forward to meet Bharata; but the resemblance between the brothers Rāma and Bharata is so close that she mistakes the latter for her husband! In the M. V., the voice of Ghaṭotkaca misleads Bhīma who takes him for one of Arjuna's sons (since the children of two brothers would belong to the same generation) while Ghaṭotkaca is the son of Bhīma himself. Blood is so important that it could determine, on its own strength, even the character of an individual. For this reason the queen in the Avi is surprised that a heroic youth, who rescues her daughter, should be an *antyaja*—a low caste fellow.<sup>3</sup>

Family was thus the recognised social unit. This fact is significant in another respect. It helped to determine the place of a woman in a society. A woman from her very birth, was a problem. "A father of a daughter to be married has enough to worry about" says the king in the Avi. (I). A woman, too,

1. Abhi. I-26.

2. īśwarāḥ, ātmanāḥ kula-saḍreṇa cārītṛēṇa yadi aham anusarāmi  
ārya-putram, ārya-putrasya vijayo bhavatu (Abhi. V).

3. akulīnāḥ katham evam sānukriśo bhaver. How could a low-born man be so sympathetic? Avi. I.

could destroy a family by her misconduct. A woman's faults cost the good name of a family. "By the fault of a woman a good man, in a bad family, is destroyed" ( *niviṣṭe duṣkule sādhuḥ strīdoṣeṇeva dahyate*. ( P. R. I-14 ). A woman's capacity to destroy was greater than that of a man. In her life-time a woman would be a member of two families--that of her parents in the beginning and that of her husband later. The King in the *Avi.* says as much : *kuladvayam hanti madena nārī*, "A woman, by her bad behaviour, destroys two families" (1-3). As for the girl herself, the time before marriage was happier than that afterwards. For this reason, the female-friend in the *S. V.* tells *Padmāvatī* to enjoy before she is given away in marriage. ( *nirvartyatām tāvad ayam kanyābhāvaramaṇīyah kālah*, I. ). Once married, the girl became merely the property of her husband. In the *Prat.* *Lakṣmaṇa* does not attempt to dissuade *Sītā* from following her husband to the forest. Why should he? " wife is her husband's property" ( *bhartṛ-nāthā hi nāryah*, *Prat.* 1-25 ). In addition to this general privilege of being treated as a chattel, a woman of aristocratic traditions enjoyed the right to live a sequestered or purdah ( *avaguṇṭhana*, *Prat.* I ) life.

The married woman, however, was compensated in some ways for this loss of human rights. Within the four walls of a family she wielded authority and commanded high respect as a mother. Even *Ghaṭotkaca*, a being of *Rākṣasa* traditions, speaks highly of a mother's position.

mātā hi manusyāṇām daivatānām ca daivatam (53)

"A mother is a deity indeed to men as well as to gods" ( *M. V.* 37 ).

The chief characters in all these plays are more usually addressed under a maternal appellation. Thus *Rāma*, *Lakṣmaṇa* and *Bharata* are addressed as *kausalyāmātah* ( one whose mother is *Kausalyā* ), *sumitrā-mātah*, and *kaikeyī-mātah* respectively ; *Duryodhan* is *gāndhārī-mātah*, *Kamsa* and *Vasudeva* address each other ( *Bal.* ) as *saurasānī-mātah*, *yādavī-mātah* respectively. Where a married woman enjoyed such honourable position there was no place for some early and less refined practices like the *niyoga*—the "levirate" system. *Rāma*, in the *Abhi.*, accuses *Vāli* of unlawfully living with his own younger brother's wife.

"Never should an elder brother live with his younger brother's wife" ( *na tveva hi kadācit jyeṣṭhasya yavīyasodārābhimarśanam*—I ).

180276

The only other social unit, bigger than the family and closely knit on the same ties as blood-relationship and heredity was the caste. The Brahmins and the Kṣatriyas are referred to as the higher, and the more important classes.: The Brahmin, however, has an undecided superiority over all others. In the P. R., the universally respected Bhiṣma himself says that Drona is superior since "you ( i. e. Drona ) are a Brahmin and I a Kṣatriya," ( *dvijo bhavān kṣatriya-vainśajā vayam* P. R. I-27 ). Even Karna in the K. B. says that he would never go against a Brahmin ( *brāhmaṇa-vacanam iti na mayā atikrānta-pūrvam* ). Circumstances too are such as to justify a Brahmin's superiority. Sacrifices must have been still in vogue as it would appear from the enthusiasm and the elaborateness in which they are described at the opening of the P. R. People believed in the efficacy of the Vedic rites.<sup>4</sup> In every way the customs, conventions and superstitions in vogue speak of a well-established priesthood. Often-times the very plot of a play is highly illustrative in this respect. The story in the S. V. and in the P. Y. is possible only because the minister Yaugandharāyaṇa believes in the fortune telling of a Siddha. Similarly, Kaikeyī in the Prat. takes upon herself the unpleasant task of sending Rāma and others into exile in order that a sage's curse may not be falsified. Her own words ( VI ) are definite; *apariharāṇīyo maharśīśāpah putra-vipravāsam vinā na bhavati*. "The curse of a sage could not be averted, nor was it possible ( to minimise its dangerous results ) except by sending the son into exile." In such a society of customs and conventions and ritualism a Brahmin was expected to be well-versed in so many lores. Thus, Rāvaṇa, disguised as a Brahmin in the Prat. mentions the various lores he knows :—Manu's Code of Law, Māheśwara Yoga, the Politics of Bṛhaspati, the Nyāya of Medhātithi, and the Prācetasa rules in ritualism ( *śrāddha-kalpa* ). Teaching centres, too, must have existed. In the S. V. I, the śiṣya mentions Lāvāṇaka in the *Vatsa* country as a centre of education.

4. Cf. *hutam ca dattam ca tathaiva tiṣṭhati* "Whatever is offered in a sacrifice or is given in charity lasts eternally, i. e. brings eternal bliss." ( K. B. 22 ).

The life of the Kṣatriyas, on the other hand, seems to have been a hard one. From the S. V. and the Avi. one could easily see that the country was divided into a number of petty principalities. A Kṣatriya was brought up in a martial atmosphere. To fight was his one creed in life. It was either to die or to kill on the battlefield but never to be defeated. Thus the old king Virāṭa in the P. R. says that he would acquire fame if he dies or in case he releases the cows from the enemies he would acquire merit. ( *nidhanam api yaśas syāt mokṣayitvā to dharmaḥ*—P. R. II, 5 ). Similarly, the boy Abhimanyu says that a hero must either die or conquer on the battlefield ( *avaśyam yudhi vīrāṇam vadho vā vijayo tha vā*—P. R. III, 5 ).

Political life under such circumstances cannot but be very unsettled. A Kṣatriya prospered according to his power. So, as in the S. V. and the Avi., we always find a king quarrelling with his neighbour. A Kṣastriya's career was in his weapons ( *bāṇādhīnā kṣatriyāṇām pravṛddhiḥ*—P. R. I, 24 ). Any adventure could carve out a kingdom for himself. No wonder that Duryodhana ridicules the Pāṇḍavas when the latter negotiate for a share in the kingdom.

rājyam nāma nṛpātmajaih sahṛdayair jitvā ripum bhujyate  
tal loke na tu yācyate na tu punar dīnāya va dīyate (56)  
( D. V. 24 )

“Princes should conquer their enemies and then rule and enjoy a kingdom. Nobody ever begs for a kingdom nor does any one give it in charity.”

Even after conquering, it was not so easy to maintain it. Each and every prince was waiting to grab it at the earliest opportunity. So, in the Prat. Rāma advises his brother Bharat not to neglect the kingdom for a moment. ( *rājyam nāma muhūrtam api na upekṣāṇīyam*. Prat. IV ). Conspiracies might be hatched within the very walls of the palace. So even Sītā is slightly cynical when she hints that intrigues reign in palaces ( *bahu-vṛttāntāni rājakulāni nāma*. Prat. I ); justice, popularity, leniency etc. are more in the diplomacy than in the doctrines of the day. It is difficult to see the motive of the old king Virāṭa when he feels ashamed to levy taxes without offering protection in return. ( *nirlajjo mama ca karah karāṇi bhuṇkte*, P. R. II, 3 ). The virtuous protestation is so ill-placed. The freedom of style

and the frequency of situations in which fights are usually described in these plays, the way in which Vāli is killed on the stage ( Abhi. I ) or that in which Kāmsa dashes, presumably on the stage, a baby against a rock ( Bal. I )—all this shows the roughness of the path that led to the throne.

The unsettled political conditions are further reflected in the bias against town-life. The plays rarely let go a chance of showing disgust towards the turbidity and the turbulence of town-life. When people are being pushed away even in the forest with the roughness of policemen, Yaugandhrāyāna exclaims—*upavanam grāmīkaroti ājñayā*. “ Authority ( i.e. the use of it ) is turning the forest precincts into a town ” ( S. V. I, 3 ). Similarly, the sight of dust and din is immediately associated with a town. ( *vanam idam nagarīkaroti*—this forest is changing into a city. Prat. VII-4. )

In such a society it is a satisfaction to find that art has advocacy and appreciation. Dancing is very frequently mentioned and introduced in the Bāl. Even when a fight is going on the spectators do not fail to notice the graceful steps of the fighters. Thus in the Abhi., VI, 14 Vidyādhara notices the fighters stepping a cārī ( *cārībhir etān paīivartamānān* ). Music, too, held a high place. Queen Vāsavadattā in the S. V. is said to play on the *vinā*. In the Avi., too, the hero is a connoisseur of music ( Act II ). In the prologue to the Prat, the nāṭī is called on the stage for no other purpose than singing. Painting was another art which had worked up its place to the royal courts. Thus in the D. V. Duryodhana is looking at the picture wherein the episode of Draupadi being dragged by hair is sketched. The words in which he describes the picture are sufficiently technical to show that painting was appreciated and cultivated as an art: *aho asya varnāḍhyatā aho asya bhāvāpannatā, aho yuktalekhatā*. “ What a proper placing in the colour. How fittingly does it convey the feelings ! Oh, how proportionate are the lines and the perspective ! ” Lastly, drama and staging are mentioned in connection with extraordinary or festive occasions. Thus at the time of Rāma’s coronation, in Prat. I, the maids are making arrangements in the music hall ( *sangīta sālā* ). The actors ( called nāṭakīyas ) have been asked to represent a play. What is still more interesting, the actors have been instructed to select such a play as would suit

the occasion ( *kālasamvādinā nāṭakena* ). Would it be too much to believe that play-acting had reached a stage where it could meet the demands not only of the audience but of the occasion ?

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( B ) *Tendencies of the Early Drama.*

The history of social life sketched so far should, if it were known to us in some first-hand authoritative form, have been the background of our study. As it is, the intriguing situation arises of first reconstructing such a history from such a literary material and then studying those very literary models in the light of the history thus reconstructed. As Carlyle says, " In any measure to understand the poetry, to estimate its worth and historical meaning, we ask, as a quite fundamental inquiry : what that situation was ? Thus the History of a Nation's Poetry is the essence of its History, political, economic, scientific, religious." <sup>5</sup> Thus, with no desire to offer any further justification, it would be noted as the only method of an honest study.

In what relation do the thirteen plays, under question, stand to the society depicted above ? How far do they represent the contemporary social tendencies ? What place do they occupy in the history and development of drama as an art ? These are some of the questions to be answered here. That the drama was recognised as a cultured entertainment for the rich and the poor alike is evident from Prat. I referred to above. Singing and dancing had already been incorporated in the acted play. There is only one thing which strikes even a casual reader of these plays. All the plays are prominent in betraying their inspiration mainly from tradition. The story of King Vatsa ( the S. V. and P. Y. ) on one hand and those from the epics, on the other, go to prove that the avowed object of the dramatist is to sing the glories of the highest god and of the highest man of Vedic traditions. The cult of sacrifice is upheld and applauded ( P. R. I. ). The gods of the heroic age—Rāma and Kṛṣṇa—are the subjects of devotion and description in the Prat, the Abhi. and the Bāl. The very godliness of the gods is that handed down by the epics. Of the two, Kṛṣṇa is a greater favourite since he is identified, more

frequently than Rāma, with the highest God. It is Kṛṣṇa again to whom the divine miracles are attributed ( Bāl. ).

That the epics influenced these early plays to an essential extent is obvious not only from the stories but from the style in which they are depicted. Narration and description, as in the epics, still form the foremost feature. Features that distinguish drama from other literary forms are in general not prominent yet. Construction and characterisation are still in a nascent stage. Some scenes here and there have in them the making of dramatic art : e.g (1) in the S. V. the King dreams about his first queen whom he believes to be dead but who as the audience knows, is still alive though disguised and is actually present on the stage; (2) the way in which Bharata, in the Prat. comes to know of his father's death from the latter's carved figure in the House of the Dead; or (3) the scene where Abhimanyu the son of Arjuna is brought face to face, in the P. R., with his father and uncles who are living incognito just then. Such scenes, however, are not only rare, but are often introduced in crude abruptness and developed with no delicacy. Thus in the Prat. though the scene is dramatic, its very possibility is out of question. The time required to fetch Prince Bharata from the house of his maternal uncle is ridiculously short; but, in that short while, not only is King Daśaratha dead but his figure carved and placed in the House of the Dead ( to top that, Bharata is aware of such a place for the first time ! ) It seems as if the roughness of the social life is reflected in the crudity of the plays. They are typical of the age in which they are written. They are virile, they are forceful, they move with speed and determination, but they lack that harmony and delicacy which alone could sustain the virility by making it attractive.

The social conditions seem, to some extent, to have checked the development of the art in one respect. The authors of all these plays are not only dramatists but teachers in morality. The lessons taught are, of course, elementary. It is that universal yet primitive sentiment which another great dramatist of another time was to express with due protests :

O thoughts of men, accurst

Past, and to come, seems best; things present worst.<sup>6</sup>

6. King Henry IV-ii, Act i, Sc. iii.

This fatalist outlook, an outlook more likely than any other to prove fatal to art, is to be discerned in all these plays. It is all the sadness and the wickedness of the world that are held before us as the curse of this life and the cause of the life destined to come. God has been represented throughout more as a punisher of the wicked than as a protector of the good. Even the historical hero—King Vatsa—moves in a world of the evil inevitable. The youthful and heroic prince Avimāraka is labouring under the curse of a sage as he steps on the stage. It is true that most of the plays end in a happy union or re-union of the hero with the heroine. That is only a superficial aspect and should not lead us blindly to believe that all these plays are comedies, much less to generalise that tragedy in art is unknown to Sanskrit drama. Who could be deaf to the eloquent pleading of all these plays on behalf of man helplessly fighting against fate? The Vidūṣaka in S. V. (Act IV) is a true representative of the age and of the dramatist when he sadly sings the tune, *anatikramanīyo vidhiḥ, īdrśamidānīm etat.* “Fate is difficult to be overpowered; well, 'tis so and so;” that even the greatest should, and shall, suffer is a sentiment expressed with conviction and consistency. This sentiment is the very element of tragedy in drama. It is only the fervent faith of Hinduism that saves the hero from being placed, as the Shakespearean tragic hero is, in such circumstances that his fall is assured. The tragic element, however, is to be seen in the fact that the hero is placed high above all the characters before he is made to suffer. And here does the dramatist, assume the role of a teacher in morality. The wicked, of course, pay with life for their wickedness while good character in itself is no guarantee to any exemption from occasional or inevitable lapses.

The five one-act plays based on the episodes of the *Mahābhārata* lend support for admitting such a conception of tragedy. D. V., D.G., and U.B. are plays where Duryodhana is the central figure. He is not, however, the mean-minded, self-centred, sinful demon, that he is in post-epic tradition. He is a true representative of the dramatist's age: arrogant, adventurous, consistently unscrupulous and brutally reasonable. Inevitable doom darkens round such a character as night that hovers slowly, phantom-like and fear-inspiring round the timid, and sinful hearts. The most noble Karṇa (in K.B.) is made a victim

of his own nobility and all because he was chivalrous and sincere in siding with the wrong. This tragic element, as said above, was saved fateful conclusions because of faith on the one hand and of ignorance on the other. The Hindu mind defied history by persisting in its belief of a happier life and a happier world to come. Present life and the earthly globe were presumed, at the very beginning, not to bring in any happiness. No hopes, no despairs; no desires, no achievements. The character of the *Vidūṣaka* is symbolic of this attitude. He is a man destined to eternal disillusionment—where happiness is concerned. The hero and the heroine may be united, but he himself is never destined even to be present on such occasions (cf. S. V., A. *Sāk.*, *Vik.* etc.). In thus creating a symbol for its age and its expression the drama of *Bhāsa*'s days could be said to have made the first advance towards art. The social surroundings were not as yet such as could ensure it a happy, rapid and healthy growth. Drama now was not so much a representation of man's life in the world as of man's position in the world. The dramatist desired not to construct the facts of life but to convey a sense of the forces in life.

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## CHAPTER XVI

## KĀLIDĀSA

SO FAR we have seen that the early Sanskrit plays (i) were more or less inspired by, and thus based on, the epics ; (ii) were narrative in form and development ; (iii) were staged in the open as the absence of stage-directions indicates and for the very audience to which the Sūta, in earlier days, recited the epics ; and (iv) that the authors of these plays were first moralists and then artists, if at all. When we come to the next known period to be studied in this chapter, we notice a great change with respect to all these above four points.

If one were to speak on the evidence of plays available, one would say that from the first century B. C. or A. D. there was a complete blank. Is it possible that during these 300 years or so no dramatist was born or that Sanskrit drama was not at all encouraged ? It is true that as history tells us, the cultured ascendancy during this period belonged not to the Aryan society in the north but to the Andhras, etc. etc. i. e. to the adventurers of the non-Aryan community in the south. In spite of these circumstances, however, it seems that Sanskrit literature, was encouraged ; only, patronage now passed into the hands of the foreigners like the Scythians established in the west and of non-Aryan royal families like the Andhras etc. in the south. As has been suggested<sup>1</sup> already these foreigners, as the inscriptive evidence shows, extended whole-hearted patronage to Sanskrit literature and the Vedic traditions.

The evidence of the literary materials too leads to the same conclusion. The plays next available immediately after those studied so far are those of Kālidāsa. In the prologue to one of his plays he refers to earlier dramatists of whom only Bhāsa is known to us.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the very excellence of Kālidāsa's plays presupposes many more earlier dramatists. Lastly, we have evidence in Kālidāsa ( as will be seen below ) which shows that drama had been developing and had actually developed by his time to such an extent as to deteriorate into a fixed, lifeless form.

1. Vide infra. Chap. VIII

2. prathita-yāśasām Bhāsa-saumilla-kaviputrādīnām prabandhān  
atikramya, ( Mālav. Prologue )

It was the genius of this great dramatist that not only saved drama from degradation but raised it to an artistic source of joy—even at the risk of temporary (or contemporary) unpopularity.<sup>3</sup>

Kālidāsa is the reputed author of three Sanskrit plays—the Vikramorvaśiyam, the Mālavikāgnimitram and the Abhijñāna Śākuntalam. The first and the last deal with stories from traditional mythology (*purāṇa*) and traditional history (*itihāsa*). The hero of the second mentioned play is King Agnimitra—the son of Puṣyamitra who, in the early part of the second century B. C. founded the Sunga dynasty.<sup>4</sup> Thus it appears that even in Kālidāsa the same tendency, as in the early days, is to be found in singing of the glorious past. That, however, would be a hasty judgment. Kālidāsa, as could be seen from his plays, is first and foremost a student of art. In all his three plays singing, dancing, painting etc. are introduced in words and circumstances that reveal Kālidāsa as an expert connoisseur and critic. What is more to the point is his views on drama. To him drama is not, as to the early writers, a popular method of preaching; drama, he says, is the study and not the moral of life. It is the varied scope of such a study that makes drama interesting to the various tastes of the public. Music, dance, painting etc. do not attract each and all while drama, combining in itself, all these and dealing with the ways of the world, claims a greater audience than does any other art. "Here", he says "is to be found the manifold ways of the world arising from the three qualities (i. e. the variety of tastes and talents); and hence, though varied in form and scope, drama is an entertainment common to people of different tastes."<sup>5</sup>

Under these circumstances one would be justified in expecting that Kālidāsa would work *off the beaten track*. Is such an expectation fulfilled in his three plays? It seems, on the whole, that Kālidāsa eventually effected a revolution in the world of

3. It is not the object of the present work to discuss the age of Kālidāsa; the sort of internal evidence elaborated in this chapter would strengthen the view that assigns Kālidāsa to the period of Samudra-Gupta or his son Chandra-Gupta II (373 A. D. to 415 A. D.). (57)

4. Cf. C. H. I. Vol. I p. 518.

5. traiguṇoydbhavam aःra loka-caritam nānārasam drsyate, nāṭyam  
bhinnarucet janasya bahudhāpyekam samātiādhanam (Mālav. 1-4). (57)

letters. Though, from the point of view of their plots, the three plays seem to belong to the antiquated, standardised type dealing with love-stories of traditional kings, one could see that the development and the construction therein point to an entirely opposite conclusion. Nay, it seems that Kālidāsa deliberately selected the most popularly known stories so that he could divert all his skill towards their artistic construction. The audience already knew the story; and imperceptibly and with no harm or disadvantage to the audience he left out the old narrative style.

It would be strange, indeed, if Kālidāsa achieved all this at one stroke or in his very first play. In the three plays we notice a gradual, progressive adjustment of his art and conception; and we also notice the painful struggle of an original mind with that Universal Ego—the dull and deadening conservatism. The partiality of Kālidāsa to music and dancing is consistently pronounced. In his very first play he assigned a great part to music and dancing. The only novel path he struck first was in that respect; but otherwise, his first play viz., the *Vikramorvāśiyam* is nearer to the standard type. The *Mālavikāgnimitram* is a further improvement on the *Vik.* For this reason, we are inclined to hold, against the more or less unanimous verdict of well-respected and authoritative scholars that the *Vik.* and not the *Mālav.* is the first of Kālidāsa's plays. The poet in the *Vik.* is evidently younger than in the *Mālav.* The very manner in which he craves the indulgence of his audience speaks a diffident voice. Of course, he says, it is my play, but that is not at all the important point about it. "You should listen to it out of sympathy for the lovers, or out of respect for the noble characters therein. I beg of you to follow attentively this work of Kālidāsa."<sup>6</sup> The *prastāvanā* or the prologue is modelled on earlier types as in the plays of Bhāsa. As soon as the *Sūtradhāra* introduces the play there is a cry for help behind the curtain and the *Sūtradhāra* then speaks in the same words as his predecessor in Bhāsa did. "What is this I hear? A cry for help Did I not hear it immediately I requested my audience to—Oh, I know."<sup>7</sup> The poet's construction of the plot is less skilful and

6 *prāṇayisu vā dākṣināt athavā sadvastu-puruṣa-bahumānāt, śrūṇuta manobhir avahitaiḥ kṛyām imām kālidāsasya* (*Vik.* I-12). (58)

7 *aye kim nu khalu mad vijñāpanānantaram kurariṇā-miva ākāśe śabdāḥ śrūyate ..... bhavatu, jñātām* (*Vik Prologue*). (59)

his similes are more commonplace than elsewhere. The author here is more an enthusiastic young poet than a craftsman of art and ideas. The characters in the Vik. ( e. g. the Vidūṣaka ) are standardised as in earlier plays. Kālidāsa was not only a new arrival himself, but the first one of his time, in the field of drama. He says in the prologue that upto that time only plays of earlier dramatists were produced ; that his was the first of a moderner, so to say. Why should he say that ? What harm is there, one would like to ask him, if earlier plays alone were staged ? No harm, Kālidāsa would reply, but not so much good either; they are all old and dull, so dull and so stereotyped, but my play is something different, something *quite unusual* ( apūrvā ). The Sūtradhāra in the Vik. says as much and all this in the prologue.<sup>8</sup>

There was another reason as to why Kālidāsa boasted of his play as unusual ( apūrvā ), in spite of its plot, development and characters being of the early standardised type. In his enthusiasm for music and dance Kālidāsa had boldly introduced a new feature which, as he thought, was also more dramatic on the stage. That new feature was the whole of Act IV where for the most part only one character—that of the hero-king Vikrama moved on the stage. The king was virtually mad. He had lost his beloved Urvaśī ; he would not rest till he found her out. This mood of the hero was most favourable to a variety of music and dance. Secondly, to remove the possibility of the scene growing monotonous to the audience Kālidāsa introduced two ethereal nymphs who kept on singing and humming, in Prākṛt melodies, an allegory about an elephant-king madly in search of his beloved.<sup>9</sup> The hero-king was so mad that he would stop anything that crossed his path to inquire of his Urvaśī. Thus, he asks a cloud, an elephant, a bee and so on. Could we *imagine* that these various objects were somehow represented on the stage ? In that case the king would disappear from the stage for some time ( the nymphs, during the while, sang their allegory ). Could we *further imagine* a representation like the following ?

8. mātiṣa. bahuśas tu pūrvesām kavīnām drṣṭah prayoga-bandhah  
so'ham adya vikramorvaśīyam nāma a-pūrvam nāṭakam prayokṣye (60)

9. Re. the arguments that the Prākṛt melodies in Act IV are spurious, see R. B. S. P. Pandit's edition. In maintaining that those passages are genuine we have not followed the arguments advanced against R. B. Pandit by Prof. R. D. Karmarkar ( in his edition of the Vik. and others ).

The hero asked an elephant, got, of course, no reply, and so walked out of the stage ; in the meanwhile, a bee was shown on the stage, the king re-entered to find the bee whom he asked as before, got no reply and so walked away as before and so on. With such an impressive stage-movement it is no wonder that Kālidāsa should be proud of his original ( *apurva* ) device ; but, to his surprise and indignation, he saw, watching during his first production more the audience than the play as any young dramatist would, that his device had not pleased the audience or at least that it did not strike them and like all other young dramatists he walked home shaking his head half in pity and half in anger,<sup>10</sup> for the audience which was too stupid to see his originality.

Great writer as he was ( to be ), Kālidāsa was neither dismayed nor discouraged. Day by day he was finding more and more of the dramatist in himself and from now on he was not going to be dictated to either by tradition or by public taste. He would rather care, it at all, for the judgment of the discerning few since they could, if ever, form an independent opinion about any thing and on its merits while the ( so-called ) public taste had no deep roots in convictions but grew up like a mushroom, anywhere and any time.

All this Kālidāsa said in as many words in the prologue to his second play, the *Mālav.*, where the Sūtradhāra says rather contemptuously.

aye viveka-viśrāntam abhihitam, paśya,  
purāṇam ityeva na sādhu sarvam  
na cāpi kāvyam navam ityavadyam  
santah pariśyānyatarad bhaajante  
mūḍhah para-pratyayaneya-buddhiḥ (61)

“ Your talk has no reason in it ; anything is not good simply because it is old, and any work is not bad simply because it is new. The experts compare, decide and choose while the ignorant follow the opinions of others. ”<sup>11</sup>

10. It would have been all pity if he were to know that any explanation that his device ( with the *prākṛt* melodies ) is genuine is rejected by some modern scholars by saying that it is a strain on the imagination.

11. *Mālav.* 1-2

To say that only old plays are good or that no new play could be good is just to talk nonsense. Secondly, a play is not mere recitation or narration as most of the old plays are. A play is essentially a representation or as Pañdita-Kauśika says in Mālv. I, prayoga-pradhānam hi nātyam, a drama is essentially a performance. With this theory of his, Kālidāsa was prepared even to risk the disapproval of the learned. "Only fools cater to the good opinion of the learned," says the wise Vidūṣaka.<sup>12</sup> But luckily the discerning few were so pleased with the stage device ( prayoga) in the Vik. that they requested the stage-manager ( Sūtradhāra) to produce Kālidāsa's Mālavikāgnimitra.<sup>13</sup>

Thus does Kālidāsa boldly stand in his second play, all for art as he sees it. He pities those good writers who compromise with public taste at the expense of their art. Theirs is not art but commerce; to earn a livelihood they sell their knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

So he sets out to treat his story in a new fashion. In itself, the story of the Mālav. is the usual one of a King's love for a pretty girl, mixed with the follies and intrigues of the Vidūṣaka and with jealousies within the harem. But the whole atmosphere, the entire development are of an original type. Music, dance, painting and fine arts ( Śilpa ) on the one hand and the ingenuity of the Vidūṣaka on the other, place this love-story on a different plane. Kālidāsa insists that the love of hero-king is not of a coarse type. When the king saw Mālavikā's ( the heroine's ) portrait he was just attracted, but when he saw her sing and dance he was simply conquered. Thus in II-14 says the hero :

sarvāntahpura-vanitā-vyāpāram prati nivṛtta-hṛdayasya  
sā vāma-locanā me snehasyaikāyanībhūtā. (62)

" My heart is turned from the ladies of the harem; this pretty-eyed one is my all and only attraction. "

Secondly, the whole credit for the development of the plot belongs to the Vidūṣaka. By starting a quarrel between her

12. Bhagavati, pandita-paritosa-pratyaya nanu mūḍhā jātih ( Mālav. II ).

13. Cf. abhihito śmi vidvat-pariṣadā etc. (*Ibid* Prologue)

14. Yasyāgamah Kevalajivikaiva tam jñāna-panyam vanijam vadanti ( *Ibid* I-17 )

two teachers he made it possible for the heroine to be personally brought before the hero; and then the play unfolds itself ( Acts I and II ). On the occasion of the *dohada* function of the Aśoka tree the Vidūṣaka caused ( deliberately ) the queen to stumble from the swing so that, disabled as she ( the queen ) was, the function had to be delegated to Mālavikā ( III ). When Mālavikā was imprisoned by the jealous queen, the Vidūṣaka feigned snake-bite, acquired the queen's signet, and thus seeking an entry brought the hero to the imprisoned heroine ( IV ). In all this the Vidūṣaka is not the supposed court-fool; his plans too, are brilliant in his own way. One might boldly assert that the play was written entirely for the Vidūṣaka's character.

Such an assumption is not fanciful or far-fetched. Kālidāsa, it appears, has a defined purpose in making the whole play revolve round the Vidūṣaka. In the Mālav. the Vidūṣaka is not the standardised fool; on the other hand, as already mentioned,<sup>15</sup> Gautama, as he is called here, has a fund of common-sense. Only a close student of human nature could successfully incite two sufficiently cultured men like the teachers to quarrel among themselves. Gautama does it. He has an independent eye for beauty as when, on the entrance of Mālavikā, he says to the King :

prekṣatāṁ bhavān, na khalu asyāḥ praticchandāt  
parihīyate madhuratā (63)

“ The charm of the original is no less than that of the portrait ” ( II ).

His field of observation is wide and his application apt as could be seen in remarks like—

( i ) daridra ātura iva vaidyena upaniyamānam auśadham icchasi.

“ You are like a poor patient who looks to a doctor's medicine ( which he cannot afford ). ” ( II )

( ii ) sā tapasvinī nāga-rakṣitā iva nidhir na sukham samāsādayitavyā.

“ That poor dear is not easy to win like treasure guarded over by a cobra. ” ( III )

( iii ) aho kumbhīlakaiḥ kāmukaiśca parihaṇīyā candrikā.

15. See above Chap. X.

" Oh ! Thieves and lovers should avoid moonlight." (IV)

His ready-wittedness too is apparent as when in Act IV he relieves the tension of an awkward situation with an apt remark :

sādhu re piṅgala vānara. suṣṭhu pārītrātas  
tvayā saṅkaṭāt sapakṣah. (64)

" Bravo Piṅgala, my monkey ; thanks for saving your caste-fellow from a difficulty."

It is such a character with common-sense that gives a realistic touch to the entire atmosphere of the play. In the company of this Vidūṣaka the hero could never sink into that melodramatic and monotonous type as usual. Like an innocent, smiling child he brings a smile to every sour or serious-looking face around him. His realism is both infectious and provoking. The scene of the quarrelling teachers and that of the jealous queen, Irāvatī— are natural responses to the Vidūṣaka's realistic mentality. The Vidūṣaka, in essence, is the worldly type of man. Wherever he moves, the ways of the world (loka-carita) move too. With the creation of one such character the genius of Kālidāsa has enlarged the scope of drama. A drama is no longer a romantic biography of fairy prince but a realistic representation of the ways of the world. The Vidūṣaka—a kind of Mr. Everyman— has found a high place in literature. It is Mr. Everyman and not an Avatar that belongs to the world. So, to understand the world one must first study the average man, the rightful and the long-established inhabitant of this globe.

The study of the average man is always the beginning but not always the end of the study of the world and its ways. The world is something more than what the average man makes or thinks it to be. It has a definite past, so it must be having a future. The average man is guided by the past, so he will be goaded by the future. Though he knows it not, man is a product of the unfathomed past and may be, likewise, a result in the fathomless future. Thus man is a conscious citizen of this globe, but an unconscious citizen of the world that was and of the world to be. Whether he likes it or not, the student of the world has to face this conclusion. Kālidāsa was not brought up in vain in the Hindu traditions. His reasoning led him direct to such a conclusion. He was himself floating out of

the yawning past and visualised himself helpless in the future. Was it his intellectual struggle, supremacy and solitariness that drove him to raise his hands to the Almighty to be saved from the world-to-be? His last words in his last play—the *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam* betray the helplessness of an honest intellect before its own brilliance. “Let the King turn to his subjects’ welfare; let the learned learn to grow wiser” (i. e. let the innocent fools grow at least more innocent and more foolish) but, runs the supplication—

mamāpi ca kṣapayatu nīlalohitāḥ  
punarbhavam parigata-śaktir ātmabhūḥ (65)

“Let the Inner God, Nīlalocita, whose powers enmesh me, let him—let him save me from the world to be.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus the last play is an evidence of the higher studies and the higher powers of Kālidāsa. In its background and its general atmosphere, in its plan and its development it is entirely different from the *Mālav.* The *Mālav.* deals with a historical (known), while the *A. Śāk.* deals with a mythical or rather a traditional, (unknown) hero. In the former, the palace walls contain within themselves the different ways of the world; in the latter, Earth and Heaven form the playground of human fate and possibilities. The atmosphere in the *A. Śāk.* is mostly that of a hermitage, that of the Earth (Acts I to IV) and that in the Heaven (Act VII). Let us not forget to remember that a hermitage in those days signified the close of a man’s life. In both the *Mālav.* and the *A. Śāk.* the theme is *loka-carita*; but the *loka* (world) in the *Mālav.* is so different from that in the *A. Śāk.* The first deals with a *man*, the second with *man*. Duṣyanta and Śākuntalā,—the hero and heroine, Man and Woman—are taken through all the worlds, from the world originated by love to the world where love is consummated. The worldly-wise Vidūṣaka of the *Mālav.* would in the *A. Śāk.* be a child groping for his way in this tremendous journey from the unknown to the unknown. And wisely has Kālidāsa, the artist, left the Vidūṣaka, an earlier artistic creation of his, in the background. Not only does the Vidūṣaka in the *A. Śāk.* not play an important part, but has been deliberately removed from the centre of the action. The Vidūṣaka never saw Śākuntalā (I), was not present at the

16. *A. Śāk.* VII. *Bharatavākyā.*

love-marriage (III), is removed from the scene of repudiation (V), and left behind at the time of the re-union (VII).

\* \* \*

The story of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā, as told from the epic days, was a *love-story*, of a gallant prince and an innocent beauty; but with Kālidāsa it is a story of *love*. Long before Kālidāsa had found out that love as depicted and understood in the love stories, was not *love* the eternal, instinctive, all powerful constructive and creative force that it is. It is better, said Kālidāsa, that love be not consummated than that it should be cultivated; it is not that the hero and the heroine meet and then fall in love, but that, if each is capable of love, they *must meet*,—it is immaterial if they meet here or elsewhere. Thus says the hero-king in the Mālav. (III. 15).

anāturotkaṇṭhitayoh prasidhyatā  
samāgamenāpi ratir na mām prati  
paraspara-prāpti-nirāśayor varam  
śarīra-nāśopi samānurāgayoh. (66)

“ I would not be pleased at the union, though successful, of the two where one is longing and the other not; where each loves the other with the same intensity it matters not even if they die in despair. ”

So we find that in his last play Kālidāsa has depicted Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā in a different way. As the play opens Duṣyanta enters chasing a stag and throughout the play Duṣyanta is more a king with manly habits but never the usual hero-king sickening yet surfeited with love. The opening speech of the Vidūṣaka in Act II emphasises Duṣyanta’s love for hunting; if we are to reject the Vidūṣaka’s account as exaggerated the Army Commander comes in to correct us. Hunting, he says, is a virtue with King Duṣyanta, who, so to say, is built of sterner stuff (II-3). That Duṣyanta is a dutiful and conscientious king is obvious<sup>17</sup> No hero king of a love-story has anywhere else

17. Cf. V 4. 5. Also—

vetravati, madvacanād amātyam āryapiśunam brūhi.  
ciraprabodhanān na sambhāvitam asmābhīr adya dharmāśanam  
adhyāśitum. yat pratyavekṣitam paurakāryam āryeṇa tat  
patram āropya dīyatam iti. (67)

“ Vetravati, let the minister know that we have not sat in Council today as we left our bed quite late. So whatever affairs have been gone through by the Minister should be despatched to us in writing ” (Act VI)

been depicted in this light. Such a Duṣyanta one least expects to be involved in a love-affair. Likewise, Śakuntalā is not, like other heroines, brought up in the traditions of luxury and amorousness. And lastly, the hermitage is the last place for cupid's trade to flourish. And yet such a hero and such a heroine fall in love with each other amidst such surroundings ! Here is Love ; Love that is free and healthy, Love that is not only nursed, nourished and consummated in a hermitage (the laps of Mother Nature so to say) but that is never allowed into the interior of towns with slums, or courts of corruption or of palaces of petty-mindedness, i. e. never allowed into the interior of hum-drum life.<sup>18</sup> This world of ours is destined not to love, so it does not live. Life is love, says Kālidāsa, and love is eternal. Life too should then be eternal, shouldn't it ? But just like love, life on the terrestrial globe is not consummated. Even a powerful ( and super-human ) king like the mythical Vikrama suffers as long as he is on this mortal globe [ *Sukha-pratyarthitā daivasya* : Oh ! how fate banters human happiness ! is his cry (Vik. V) ]. This, however, is not a counsel of despair. Kālidāsa tells us that Vikrama is going to the Heavens to help Indra and there he will have his beloved Urvaśī all the rest of his days. Similarly love is held in intellectual mockery in the Mālav. against the background of the Vidūṣaka's petty intrigues. What wonder then if Kālidāsa should raise his hands in supplication and cry out,

Let the Inner God, Nīlalohita, whose powers enmesh me, let him—let him save me from the world to be.”

\* \* \*

From the foregoing it will be seen that Kālidāsa stands apart from his predecessors as an artist. Art and life differ in that the former is the achievement of intellect and intuition while the latter runs mostly along instincts. “ Any operation ” says George Santayana, “ which thus humanises and rationalises objects is called art. ”<sup>19</sup> Drama with Kālidāsa fulfils that function consciously for the first time in Sanskrit literature. Drama is not the mere representation of life but the presentation of an

18. So in Act V Śakuntalā only passes through the town as if only to bring to our notice the conditions of the palace and city.

19. *The Life of Reason ( Reason in Art )*, p. 4.

outlook on life, the presentation of life in the light of that outlook. The more we study Kālidāsa the more we find that drama as an art is entirely changing into his hands. It is not mere story-telling as in the earlier plays; it is not mere poetic outburst as, we shall see, in most of the later plays. It does not preach morality at a time when moralists were invading the fortresses of literature. Drama here is suggestive first and suggestive last. What does it suggest ? (1) The beauty of Man. (2) The beauty of Him whose handiwork man is. As for the first, Kālidāsa had long before anticipated Hamlet's sentiments about man. He could also say " What a piece of work is man ! How noble in reason ! How infinite in faculties ! In form and moving, how express and admirable ! In action how like an angel ! In apprehension, how like a God ! The beauty of the world ! The paragon of animals."<sup>20</sup> Like Hamlet too Kālidāsa saw man as " this quintessence of dust." But unlike to Hamlet, man delights Kālidāsa. The reason for this is man's parentage and heritage. To both i. e. parentage and heritage, man is an unconscious servant. Work against God, work against Nature man could not. How far man is a creature of his surroundings Kālidāsa has exquisitely shown in Acts I and VII of the A. Śāk. In the last Act Duṣyanta enters the hermitage of sage Mārica in the heavenly world. Immediately his right arm throbs (VII-13). What is the use ? he asks. But the surroundings remind him of an earlier and similar occasion when the same arm had throbbed (I-14). And the consequences ? Better not think about them. No sooner he decides to remain indifferent than words are heard from behind the stage. " mā khalu cāpalam kuru,—do not be rash." As soon as Duṣyanta heard them, he might have started in terror. Were not similar words addressed to him (in Act I) by the hermits ? He is immediately thrown back to the old days. Oh ! how pleased were then the hermits with him ! How they blessed him " to be the father of a world-conqueror " (1-12) ! Alas ! where is all that now ? Duṣyanta who, in Act I, could come to quick decisions in utmost confidence (cf. I-19) could not now be confident about things quite reasonable. Just as he is living his past, wishing that the hermits' blessings were come true, imagining what a bright boy he would have had for a son—lo, what

20. Hamlet Act, II, Sc. ii.

is this ? He is seeing a boy ( Sarvadamana ) before him ! All the parental feelings fanned by memory Duṣyanta now showers on the boy that comes on the stage. Like one in dream he actually wishes the boy were his own. Is he a world-conqueror ? Look, here is the boy's palm bearing all the marks of a world conqueror ! Poor Duṣyanta ! The more he was reminded of earlier scenes the more he felt like one who had burnt his fingers when the female ascetic ( who accompanies the boy on the stage ) kindles his hopes by observing a close resemblance between the boy and himself.<sup>21</sup> Duṣyanta dare not come to a decision. If we remember the younger Duṣyanta in Act I who within a few moments after seeing Śakuntalā decides that she must be a girl worthy of a Kṣatriya, since a cultured heart like his is drawn towards her,<sup>22</sup> we see how thoroughly Duṣyanta has now been shaken. Apart from that, he could not escape the influence of earlier memories revived under similar circumstances.<sup>23</sup> All this is not so much explained as suggested. The materials are the ways of the human world. They are embodied in the dramatist's observation. Some sort of an atmosphere is created, set against which one or two incidents of every day life are made to appear as illustrations of human conduct and character. In the history of past Sanskrit drama, the craft of the Master has inspired only one or two dramatists while, with the others, history repeated itself by standardising an earlier originality.

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21. asya bālasya te'pi samvādini ākṛtir iti vismāpitāsmi.

I am surprised that the figure and features of this boy and yourself should resemble so.

22. I-19.

23. This might be an explanation of the word abhijñāna or praty-abhijñāna in the title of the play. The word means "recognition."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MRCCHAKATIKA OF ŚŪDRAKA

WE LEFT Sanskrit Drama in the last chapter as a plant blossoming in congenial soil of contemporary social life. As a piece of literary art it fulfilled two functions : (1) it *represented*, as far as necessary, contemporary life which served as a background, and (2) it *presented* the dramatist's definite outlook on life. Kālidāsa who was the first to introduce these features was, like any other innovating genius, a revolutionary. The peculiarity of a revolution is that the followers are more fanatical than the originators. As in politics so in literature. Thus in the post-Kālidāsa period, one would expect plays that exploit the art of the Master. To such set of plays belongs the Mṛcchakaṭīka ('The Toy-Cart') attributed to king Śūdraka.

In the first place it should be borne in mind that apart from the question whether Śūdraka wrote it or not the Mṛcchakaṭīka definitely belongs to the post-Kālidāsa period. It is not our present object to discuss the date of authors; nor is such a discussion of any practical value to us. Śūdraka is a mythical character. The information about him given in the prologue to the play is too ridiculous to be utilised in a reasonable discussion. It is not the author's but the play's date that matters to us. (It is more likely for two or more persons to have one and the same name than for two or more plays to go by one and the same title.)

The story of the play would be referred to below. In the story is a sub-plot related to the incidents of a political revolution. Political revolutions, however, seem to have been such simple affairs in those days as to occur any and every day. It was as easy perhaps to occupy a throne in those days as it is for any bully in these days to occupy a seat in a third-class railway compartment. The upheaval would not affect the by-standers—unless as a piece of curiosity to those inclined idly enough.

A comparatively more important fact is that the play utilises more characters, both male and female, belonging to the lower society. Consequently the dialects used (i.e. the prākṛts used) are various (such as śauraseni, avanti, prācya, māgadhi and the apabhrāṁśas, śākāri, cāṇḍāli and dhakka). The greater part

of the play is in the dialects. Of the twenty-four or twenty-five male characters only five speak in Sanskrit. Of these five Cārudatta is the hero of the play; Āryaka is the hero of the revolution; Śatvilaka, a Brahmin of high culture skilled in breaking men's houses and women's hearts; a gambler named Dardūraka; and the Court-Examiner (adhibhāranaka). This fact may or may not be useful in determining the date of the play. Nevertheless it suggests one thing viz., that the play was probably written at a time when not only the Prākṛt dialects but even the apabhramśas were freely used and the employment of the dialects as such was more frequent.

Similarly the very development and the subject-matter of the play might throw some light on the time the play was written in. Throughout the play the hard hand of the Fate is felt. Even when everything was destined to end happily the hero is moved to compare the human being tossed by fate to buckets of water tossed by a water-wheel now up and now down. (esa kṛidati kūpa-yantra-ghaṭikānyāya-prasakto vidhiḥ.)<sup>1</sup> Buddhism is mentioned in the play in all its details and there is an actual conversion of a menial to Buddhism. (By the way, one might wonder whether, in case the author were a Buddhist, a character of a higher status would have been converted to Buddhism.) On the whole those were days of unsettled conditions and an indifferent government. Each of the observations in itself may not be of any help; but the rough life represented in the play read along with the revolution and the Buddhistic conversion (of a menial) would suggest a time immediately following the disruption of a central authority and a time when Buddhism was tolerated because it did not affect the established Hindu life. The Saṁvāhaka whose life, for a long time, is anything but reputable turns at last into a Buddhist monk and, in a fit of generosity that affects a dramatist of the 'happy-end' school, the Saṁvāhaka is made the imperial head, so to say, of all the Buddhist vihāras. Such a time we could not imagine immediately after the disruption of the Mauryan Empire since Buddhism then was a court fashion; besides, the Apabhramśa dialects

1. X 59. Also cf. Act VI where the hero's son wants the gold cart used by a neighbourly boy and the heroine sighs on this: bhagavan kṛtānta. puṣkara-patra-patita-jala-bindu-sadśaih kṛidasi tvam purusa-bhāgadheyaiḥ.

were yet to evolve. The next Empire built which tumbled down in its turn was the Gupta Empire. After its downfall in the middle of the fifth century A. D., Buddhism might have once again raised its head (as the frequent visits of the Chinese pilgrims indicate) till King Harṣa sealed its fate forever by linking it with politics in the middle of the 7th century A. D. Is it possible that the play was written somewhere between the fall of the Gupta Empire and the rise of King Harṣa? Could we, for example, read such a meaning in the fourth verse of Act VIII where the Viṭa describes the park as follows—

aśaraṇa-śāraṇa-pramoḍa-bhūtaiḥ  
vana-tarubhiḥ kriyamāṇa-cāru-karma,  
hṛdayam iva durātmānam *a-guptam*  
navam iva rājyam anirjitopabhogyam. (68)

“Here the trees are doing a good deal by joyfully offering shelter to the homeless; the park (however) is like the untutored (i. e. uncultured) heart of the wicked; it is like a new kingdom the titleship (upabhogya) to which is not yet proved.” In the above, we can understand a pun on the word “*a-gupta*” and the meaning as, “It is like the heart of the wicked; it is like a kingdom where the Guptas are no more and the new kings have not established their authority.” Further we may note that Āryaka who is successful in the revolution is called a *gopāla-dāraka*.<sup>2</sup> Leaving the above questions unanswered for the time being let us come to another striking feature viz., the influence of Kālidāsa throughout the play. Certain phrases and ideas are more obviously perceptible.

(1) In Act I when the heroine is taking off her ornaments to hand them over to Śakāra the Vita says, *na puṣpamoṣam arhati udyāna-latā* “let not the garden-creeper be deprived of its flowers.” One is immediately reminded of Kālidāsa who in A. Śāk. I-15 compares a woodland lass to *vana-latā* (a forest creeper and a townbeauty to *udyāna-latā*, a garden creeper.

(2) In Act I again the same Vita, on learning that the heroine is in love with Cārudatta, says: *suṣṭhu khalu idam ucycate, ratnam ratnena samgacchatu*. The context as well as the contents of the above remark remind one of Kālidāsa’s words in a similar situation in *Raghu*. VI-79 viz.,

2. Cf. also Act VII, *tatahpraviśati guptāryaka-pravahaṇasthah*.

tvam atmanas tulyam amum vṛṇiśva  
ratnam samāgacchatu kāñcanena. (69)

"This person suits you well; choose him, let jewel be studded with gold." The *Vita* in *Mṛcch.*, however, quotes (ucyate, it is said) "let jewel be studded with jewel."

(3) In Act IX Cārudatta protests that he did not murder Vasantasēnā. As a matter of fact, he *could* not. How could he? He would not injure even a plant by plucking its flowers. (IX-28 yo 'ham latām kusumitām api puṣpahētor ākṛṣya naiva kusumāvacāyam karomi.) The fine sentiment expressed here takes one to an equally delicate situation in A. Śāk. where Śākuntalā is described by her father in similar words (IV-8. nādatte priya-maṇḍanāpi bhavatām snēhēna yā pallavam; she loves to adorn herself with flowers but she loves you-trees-more than that and so she doesn't pluck a single sprout).

Instances could be multiplied.<sup>3</sup> More important still is the influence on the technique and the handling of the *Mṛcch.* The hero and the heroine and the atmosphere of the *Mṛcch.* are worldly in the first place; and the idea developed is the same as that of Kālidāsa. The hero and the heroine of the latter are mythical (in A. Śāk.) while those of Śūdraka are matter of fact. 'Love is Life' is the text of Kālidāsa; 'Love in Life' is the text of Śūdraka. Kālidāsa chose the unconventional (from the point of view of the subject) atmosphere of a hermitage; Śūdraka chose the unconventional quarters of a courtesan. Love, in Kālidāsa, is consummated in another world; Love, in Śūdraka, is consummated in another atmosphere (viz., after the revolution). In both, love is studied in so far as it affects character. Action there is in Śūdraka's play but it does not happen on the stage. The play is a character-study. It is like a mirror-house where each one of the ten acts is a mirror wherein a person is seen from a particular view-point. The play is suggestive of the relations of man to and of his place in the society. In doing this it follows in the foot-steps of Kālidāsa.

In order to see exactly the significance of the statement that Śūdraka's handling etc. is influenced by Kālidāsa we have to analyse minutely the structure of his (Śūdraka's) play. The

3. Cf. *Mṛcch.* IX-29 and IV-13. The last line of the former is addressed to Sakāra.

story was probably better known before the play. Cārudatta, a poor Brahmin, falls in love with Vasantasenā, a courtesan of culture. Śakāra, the brother-in-law of the ruling king, has met with rebuffs at the hands of the courtesan; so all his fury is now against Cārudatta. A mistake in taking a carriage leads Vasantasenā into Śakāra's private gardens. The latter, unable to win, strikes her and thinking her to be dead runs away. Next we find him busy accusing Cārudatta, in a court of law, of Vasantasenā's murder. Nothing can save the hero who is now led to the gallows. In the meanwhile Āryaka who, during his escape from the prison, was protected by Cārudatta is now successful in the revolution and, as his first act after coronation, saves Cārudatta from the gallows. Vasantasenā too had only fainted when Śakāra left her and now she runs into the untied arms of Cārudatta.

The story above is the reader's construction and not what the dramatist tells directly. The situations introduced by the dramatist are suggestive in themselves. In creating the atmosphere, devices like the evening time in Act I or midnight in Act III or the clouds and the thunder and the lightning in Act V etc. are improvements on Kālidāsa. They also show a greater mastery over the technique. So the story is not told but suggested, or, we might say that the story is presented in a way that suggests what the dramatist feels and thinks about it. To depict the love between the hero and the heroine is not the purpose of Śūdraka. That they love each other he tells us at the very beginning of Act I. There is something else that the dramatist wants to depict and for this he builds in Act I the outlines within which the possibilities of the development are to be described. The interest centres on Vasantasenā, the heroine. Keen and appreciative in observation, graceful in movements, sprightly in behaviour, confident and courageous she personifies in herself the Joy in Life (the same as Śakuntalā in A. Śāk. I). In theory accessible to all (as a courtesan), in fact inclined to the few deserving, from the moment she is seen fleeing from the vulgar in life ( Śakāra ) to seek safety in sympathy amidst culture and sincerity ( at Cārudatta ) we admire her courage, we appreciate her position and we identify ourselves with her fears and frolics. On one side is the poor but cultured and youthful Brahmin disgusted ( with his poverty ) and despairing ( as any

other youth would); on the other is the rich but uncultured Śakāra. While the Brāhmin has tasted the miseries of life to grow wiser and more sympathetic, Śakāra has tasted the pleasures of a high position only to grow self-centred and spiteful. Both are outwardly encouraged and helped in their respective behaviour by their friends and servants. The Brāhmin earns love from his friend Maitryēka while Śakāra buys service from his Vita. Between such extremes is Vasantasēnā placed and it is no wonder if she comes to be the point of clash.

Act I suggests the possibilities of such a clash. Cārudatta is introduced in his characteristics as a well-bred and well-behaving householder. The time in night when the evil forces are supposed to be let loose. Like the darkness of the night comes Śakāra, so swift and so dangerous. It is a welcome accident which gives a chance to Vasantasēnā to observe the contrast between Śakāra roaming like a hell-hound and Cārudatta quite a picture of decency. The hero also has a chance of seeing Vasantasēnā, not the courtesan as she would be at home with coquettish smiles and cunning eyes. He sees those very eyes now seeing safety, that very figure now hunted in ugly cruelty. The gallant youth and the admiring courtesan forgot for a moment their respective positions, that one was man with no means and the other a woman of no status. In their very helplessness these two social outlaws ran into each other's arms. Time was not yet. The joy of Life knocked at the gates of Nobility but the latter had not the power to retain it. So Vasantasēnā is sent home.

If Act I shows the hero at home and the heroine outside, Act II shows the hero in the outer world and the heroine at home. Poor Vasantsēnā! in her filthy surroundings where vagabonds and drunkards and gamblers swear and brawl and drink! Filthier still is the atmosphere that her mother breathes into Vasantasēnā's room. Is it a hard fight for the heroine. A woman of no status! Is it possible that a woman who is fighting against such surroundings has no status? Her heart goes, as if to escape, out of the window where on the road Cārudatta has given away his only garment in appreciation of gallant work. A poor Brāhmin and a man of no means! Suddenly her fight is over. No longer is she a woman of no status, nor is Cārudatta a man of no means. What is true is character. The hero,

in spite of poverty, retains his character and, the heroine, in spite of surroundings, establishes her character. They are now indispensible to each other since the heart of each throbs for the life of the other.

Act III shows the hero once again at home but now he has entirely changed. Love or the Joy of Life has vitalised his feelings. No longer does he sit at home cursing poverty, but enjoys his capacity to enjoy. It is *Love* and not *love for Vasanta-senā* which makes him rise, in his love of music, above the humdrum and into the harmony of Life. From that height we laugh at the worldly worries of the Vidūṣaka (Maitrēyaka), we generally forgive the wicked ways of the world and of the thief, and not until we meet the noble wife of Cārudatta do we descend to the earth. In the meanwhile, the neglected world has played a trick by removing the symbol of the Joy of Life in the form of the gold ornaments deposited by Vasantasenā in Act I.

Act IV shows us that this symbol *had* to disappear now. Its work was done. It came and conquered and then it took the tale of that conquest to its mistress. Paths of love seem to run in a circle. The thief loved the heroine's maid and so the stolen goods found their way back to the heroine. The fact that the hero attempted to replace the symbol only shows how perfect its conquest was. The man with no means is now the richest, richest in character; the woman with no status is now noblest—in her appreciation of nobility; and (Act V) in the midst of the mad world protesting, flashing, threatening and thundering the two are united.

To an average mind the story ends here. But the Mṛcchakaṭika, as said above, is not a love-story but a story of Love. This Love is all-creative. It creates itself before it creates all. Whatever it touches it vitalises and is ever vitalising. It builds a home, it sets up a society and so in Act VI we meet Vasantasenā mothering her lover's little boy. That boy has a clay-cart which he does not like; she helps him, with her ornaments, to get a golden cart. In a moment she herself is in the wrong cart—the cart she would never have liked. Śakāra's cart is detained owing to congestion on the road outside Cārudatta's house. Vasantasenā gets into it mistaking it for her lover's cart and

speeds headlong into the jaws of death. So does Cārudatta whose cart has been occupied by the run-away rebel with a price on his head whom our hero forgives and helps to escape. Thus the hero and the heroine are in the grips of cruel fate. But that fate is here nothing but the accidents caused by the irresponsible Joy of Life itself. Acts VI and VII tell us that the Joy of Life *has to wade* through the underworld of misery if it should illuminate the latter. So when Vasantasēnā, in Act VIII, falls down struck by the mad jealousy of Śakāra she does so not before she evokes the best traits in Viṭa and the Cēta. "The store-house of Joy and Grace is looted" says the Viṭa when he sees the lifeless body of Vasantasēnā. "Master," the poor cartman chokes out, "Master, you have committed a grave sin!" When Śakāra confronts both of them face him in a rebellious attitude. As for the heroine we need not be anxious. Her own good deeds come to save her in the form of the Saīnvāhaka whom she had earlier saved from the gamblers and who is now a Buddhist mendicant. In Act IX Cārudatta is hauled up before the authorities charged with Vasantasēnā's murder. But the whole scene serves more the purpose of showing how the mere presence of the hero is enough to evoke the best not only in the Court-examiner and the Assessors but even in that vile mother of Vasantasēnā. As to his own safety once again, good deeds of the past revive to redeem. He is, for the present, condemned to death not because the Court-examiner was convinced nor that the Assessors or the mother believed in his guilt, but, ironically enough, on the evidence of those very ornaments with which Vasantasēnā had filled his son's cart and which the Vidūśaka, during a scuffle, scatters in the court. Whatever it is, the clay-cart now fulfils its functions as a symbol of the miserable world uplifted by the touch of the joy of life. The rebel whose life was saved by Cārudatta has now succeeded and his first deed as a king is to set Cārudatta free. The joy in life has now rejuvenated the world and Vasantasēnā is re-united with Cārudatta. Without Cārudatta's help Āryaka would not have been a king and but for Vasantasēnā Cārudatta would have had no chance of saving Āryaka.

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We have discussad the play at such length for two reasons ; (1) the Mṛcchakaṭika is the only ( at least, available ) play of

the dramatist, and (2) the play shows the new departure introduced by Kālidāsa, in broader lines. It was said in connexion with the Mālav. that Kālidāsa, with the creation of the worldly Vidūṣaka, brought drama nearer to life. This feature was emphasised in A. Śāk. by the creation of the living character-and scenes with life. Śakuntalā as a sprightly girl laughing and enjoying in the company of her friends (I); as a love-sick maiden (III); as a wife recognising her responsibilities (IV); as a mother fighting for her position (V); and as a woman prepared at all costs to share with man the pains and pleasures of life—this Śakuntalā lives in everyday life and thought. So does Duṣyanta, a healthy young man with healthy tastes (I and II), a lover of beauty and innocence (III), a man knowing and shouldering his responsibilities (V and VI) and kind-hearted father (VII). Likewise the family life, with all intimacies and intricacies, is realistically depicted in Act IV. The Mṛcchakaṭika, too, introduces life on the stage. The scene of the gamblers in the disreputable locality (II), that of cartmen driving their carts on crowded roads (VI, VII, VIII), the one where the thief effects a break into the wall (IV) or where Śakāra and his friends chase Vasantasēnā in a dark corner of the road (I) or where the two police-officers quarrel (VI)—all these are the scenes from the matter of fact world. With these two dramatists Sanskrit drama pulsates with the currents in social life. The art of Kālidās is fresh, that of Śūdraka is powerful. Both, however, are artists to the very tips of their fingers.

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CHAPTER XVIII  
THE DOCTRINAIRE DRAMA  
( *Nātyasāstra of Bharata* )<sup>1</sup>

A. THE TEXT

FROM THE early days to the Mṛcchakaṭika of Śūdraka we have traversed a long way and as we look back we find in astonishment how such a simple, commonplace, semi-religious function like *Recitation* evolved ultimately into an artistic method of representation. The changes in the process must, naturally enough, have been so slow and so gradual as to be imperceptible for a long time. But a time does come in all such processes of evolution when an inquisitive mind takes the first chance of detecting and recording those changes. It need not be added that success alone stimulates and forms the subject-matter of such a study. With Bhāsa, Kālidāsa and Śūdraka drama grew in success and popularity. Naturally, men turned to understand analytically if possible, this new art which was recognised as art quite newly. Thus we find about the fifth or sixth century A.D. an attempt, for the first time, to systematise and codify the results of this study. It is not that drama was not studied earlier but those earlier studies could not be expected to be systematic for two reasons : (1) drama as such took time to develop into a distinctively recognised literary art, and (2) no standard plays of an artistic type could be expected till later still to justify such a study. Kālidāsa and Śūdraka mainly contributed in removing both these difficulties and soon after we have the first treatise on dramaturgy, the *Nātyasāstra* known as that of Bharata.

At the very outset a grave objection might be raised. How could it be shown that Bharata's book belongs to the 5th or 6th century A.D.? It has not been and it could not be shown. Besides, the *Nātyasāstra* attributed to Bharata and traditionally handed down in 36 chapters ( containing about 5556 verses ) may not be the work of Bharata. In that case, the date of Bharata does not affect the date of the *Nātyasāstra*. Secondly,

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1. The references can be found in the 1929 edition of *Nātyasāstra* in the Kashi Sanskrit Series, No. 60.

some original treatise on the art of recitation or on *rasa* as composed by a Bharata might have been amplified with reference to later developments. Or, lastly, original short studies on various topics concerned with recitation, representation, voice-cultivation, physical culture etc. might have been edited in an encyclopaedic form. Surmises like these are proposed not with the intention of going round a difficulty to avoid it but on the actual, textual evidence. The *Nātyasāstra* in its available form is bewildering by its construction and chaos. On first observation its construction seems so compact and so comprehensive; at the same time there is so much that seems senseless and superfluous—as the following analysis would show.

Chapter I is in the usual vein, singing the glories of the book. It proves its divine origin and establishes the sanction of antiquity by declaring that *nātya* is (i) the creation of God Brahmā and (ii) the fifth Veda open to all castes. This fifth Veda was created from out of the four Vedas (Verse 17). "Here", said Brahmā to the Gods, "here have I produced an *itihāsa*" (19). But the Gods were unable to perform it, so sage Bharata was approached. Bharata had an enviable advantage in his hundred sons (26-39). However, he found out that in the fifth Veda sons alone had not the monopoly, as in the other four Vedas, of taking their father to *swarga* and success and salvation. So he had to request Brahmā to create Apsaras damsels to play female rôles. With these initial preparations a *nāndi* and an *anukṛti* [probably a (panto-) mimic show] of the fight between Gods and demons were represented (59) on the festive occasion of Indra's victory (56. *Mahendra-vijayotsave*). The demons naturally resented this public display of their defeat and raided the performance. A *nātyagṛha* (playhouse) had thus to be created as a protective measure. In the meanwhile Brahmā pacifies the demons by singing a lyrical panegyric of *nātya* (which is shown to have too noble an aim to vilify or libel the demons). The playhouse is constructed and on Brahmā's order Bharata performs the *rāngā-pūjā* (worshipping the stage).<sup>2</sup>

2. The word *rāngā*—*ranj*—might mean 'red-colour' or 'paint', *rāngā*—as a noun meaning 'the painted place' where originally we can imagine one painted curtain as the background.

Chapter II describes in great detail the various ways of building playhouses as well as the various models of playhouses.\* The whole description is introduced edgeways. At the end of the last chapter Bharata was asked to perform the *raṅja pūjā* and immediately after is described not the *raṅga-pūja* but the construction of the *nātya-ghra* (which has been constructed already in I 80-83). Even at that Bharata does not describe the house that has been actually built but engages in a lengthy and general description of three kinds of playhouses—the *vikṛṣṭa* ( II 34-6 ), the *caturasra* ( 89 ff ) and the *tryasra* ( 102 ). The *vikṛṣṭa* seems, as its root-meaning ( viz. ' long drawn out ' ) suggests, to have been an oblong hall with the audience facing the stage at one end. The *caturasra* was different since the audience here could be seated on four sides of the stage—either in a circle or perpendicular to the stage—in the centre. The *tryasra* is a sort of modification of the last-mentioned—the audience being on three sides ( right, left and front ) of the stage. The stage itself was a kind of platform raised on wooden pillars. The place below the platform was the *nepathyā-ghra*—the entrance to the platform being by a passage on the side away from the audience. The raised part ( the platform ) was known as the *raṅga-sīrṣa*. Certain characters had to effect an entrance not on the platform but in—between the audience and the platform. This space was known as *raṅga-pīṭha*. Such an entrance was made by removing the piece of cloth hanging on the front side of the platform to screen the green-room below. Probably the *raṅja-pūjā* was performed in the green-room *beneath the platform*.

Chapter III continues the description of this *raṅga-pūjā* mentioned in Chapter I—thus showing the contextual irrelevance of Chapter II. In IV the *raṅga-pūjā* is over and a ' samavakāra ' ( by name *Amṛta-manthana* ) is represented. This representation must have been a sort of pantomimic show since it is said (IV-4) that the audience was pleased with the ' *karma - bhāva - anudarsana* ' as contrasted with the ' *karma-bhāva-anukīrtana* ' (IV-11) of a ' *ḍīma* ' later performed in the presence of God Śiva. *Anukīrtana* probably refers to *recitation* and *anudarsana* to mere (i.e. mute) *representation*. Bharata is then advised by Śiva to introduce dancing in the *pūrvvaraṅga* (overture) and deputed

\* See Appendix B. for a note on Bharata's ' Theatre House '.

Tanḍu (18) to teach the *tanḍava* dance (258a). The sages to whom Bharata is supposed to narrate his *sāstra* ask him (258b-260a) why dancing which is connected neither with the music of the *pūrvvaraṅga* nor with the sense of the play proper should be included in the show. Bharata replies, to the dismay of some modern critics (or better, fanatics), that dancing, though not essential to or in a play, adds to the beauty of the show and the amusement of the audience. Verses 19 to 257 describe the various gestures (*karana*), postures (*aṅgahāra*), and "movements" (*recaka*) of dancing. For the present we are inclined to suspect these verses since they so violently separate the name of Tanḍu (18) from his derivative *tanḍava* (258a). Chapter V describes anew the *pūrvvaraṅga* modified in the light of Śiva's instructions.

Chapters VI and VII deal with the *rasa*-s and the *bhāva*-s. This subject is not introduced as in any way arising naturally out of the previous discussion. After the *pūrvvaraṅga* one fails to see the necessity of explaining in great details the various *rasa*-s etc. What does it matter if the sages choose to ask (not one but) five irrelevant questions: (i) What is a *rasa*? (ii) What is a *bhāva*? What is meant by (iii) a *sāṅgraha*, (iv) a *kārikā* and (v) *nirukta*? (VI-1-3). Apart from the too inquisitive sages, the variety of both matter and style in the body of the text itself raises difficulties. In the first place, besides the usual *ślokas* there are verses in *āryā* metre side by side with prose passages. This prose is written in the style usual to a commentator employing the first-person plural (for the author) while Bharata, from the very beginning, as consistently refers to himself in the first-person singular. Secondly, the *rasa*-s are mentioned now as four, now as eight and again as four original and four derived. Thirdly, the 'original' four viz., the *śringāra*, the *raudra*, the *vīra* and the *bibhatsa* are explained mostly in *śloka*-s while the other four are explained either in *āryā* metre or in prose. Similarly Chapter VII opens with an explanatory passage in prose and throughout the chapter we find materials of probably three different texts, as (a) *śloka*-s, (b) *śloka*-s quoted under the heading *bhavati cātra ślokāḥ* (to this effect runs a *śloka*)<sup>3</sup> and (c) *āryā*-s all of which are quoted as *bhavati cātra āryā* etc. This is not the place to suggest any clear-cut theory about the book

3. Cf. VII 6-10, 15, 26, 28, 54, etc.

but one reasonable explanation seems to be that Bharata, traditionally or truly reputed to be the author of a work on drama, must have also written a short treatise on the theory of *Rasa* and that some scholar later on became responsible for handing down the two together. It is further interesting to note that the topics in Chapter VIII are directly connected with the general discussion in the first five chapters and are in direct continuation of Chapter V. In the latter, the remodelled *pūrva-rāṅga* has been described. After that should come the play itself. As said in I 104-118 and XXI 123-5 a play "is an imitational representation, so to say, of the various modes and movements of the people in the matter-of-fact world" This representation, says Bharata, is called *abhinaya* (VIII-7) and thus opens Chapter VIII describing the four different ways i. e. *abhinaya*-s of reproduction and representation. Those four ways are :

- (i) āṅgika, gesture-acting [ Chapter VII-XIV ]
- (ii) vācika, speech-delivery [ XV-XXII ]
- (iii) āhārya, make-up etc. XXIII, and
- (iv) sāttvika,<sup>4</sup> emotion-display XXIV.

(i) *gesture-acting.*

Under this heading are described the various gestures : (a) of head, eyes, brows, lips and neck (VIII); (b) of hands (IX); (c) of chest, waist and hips (X); (d) of feet (XI and XII); (e) of silent acting called *gati* (XIII); and (f) of movements on the stage like exit, entrance etc. (XIV).

(ii) *vācikābhinaya, speech-delivery* [ XV-XXII ]

Under this heading are described

Phonetics (XV 10-33)

Various metres (XV 41-119 and the whole of XVI)

Figures of Speech and Poetics (XVII 44-119)

Sanskrit and Prākṛt dialects with their distribution

(XVIII and XIX)

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4. Note that in VIII-10 the author says that *sāttvika* is already described in VII. It is a mistake. The *sāttvika* in VII is described as a *bhāva* and not as 'abhinaya.' Besides the *sāttvika* referred to as an *abhinaya* is actually described in XXIV-1. 'satve kāryā prayatnas tu'; one should attempt to show feelings and emotions.

Ten kinds of dramatic representation (XX)  
 Treatment of dramatic incidents—*itivṛtti* (XXI) and,  
 The form of literary and artistic development—*vṛtti* (XXII)

No amount of patience or patriotism, much less of reason, would induce anyone to believe that all these passages have a legitimate place in a book on drama. To question their genuineness in the context is not to question their intrinsic value. Besides, the text itself is here so clumsy in arrangement. If we want a continuity of thought we shall have to arrange the text as follows. XV 1-9 and 34-40; XVIII 23, 29-35; 44a and 48b; XIX 37ff etc. Thus it will be seen that in addition to a number of verses two entire chapters, XVI and XVIII, could be safely omitted. As a matter of fact the last verse of XVI shows that that chapter concerns a *kārya-bandha*, poetical work, more than *nātya* literature.

In the passages as re-constructed above we have the description and the explanation of *vācikābhinaya* after which we are led to the ten varieties of drama. It is strange, however, to find that the matter in XX-XXII is *included* in *vācikābhinaya* (since the opening verse of XXIII says that *now* *āhārya abhinaya* is to be described etc.) The information in these three chapters is more for the dramatist than for the actor and yet it is called '*abhinaya*.' It is for this reason that we have interpreted the word '*abhi-naya*' as way or method. Thus the three chapters describing the different methods of the dramatists seem to form the earliest nucleus of a treatise on dramaturgy. The various definitions and metrical explanations in these chapters are repeated almost word to word in the *Daśarūpaka* of Dhanañjaya and the *Sāhitya-Darpana* of Vishwanātha (both works on dramaturgy, the latter including poetics). Bharata first enumerates *all the details* (*samgraha*), defines *all of them* one by one (*kārikā*) and then explains them in the same order (*nirukta*). This *samgraha-kārikā-nirukta* style of Bharata makes the book difficult to follow in comparison with the style of Dhanañjaya who mentions, defines and explains *one detail* before he goes to the next. In an introductory passage to his work the latter says as much :

vyākīrṇe manda-buddhīnām jāyate mati-vibhramah  
 tasya arthas *tat-pada* eva saṃkṣipya kriyate' nījasā (72)

"As the text is diffused the ignorant are liable to be confused; so I am abridging the original in the very words of the original" (D. R. I-5). It is clear that the text referred to here is some *nātyasāstra* which, however, has been identified with a *rasa-sāstra* by the commentator who says: *vyākīrṇe vikṣipte vistīrṇe ca rasa-sāstre manda-buddhīnām puṁsām matimohobhavati, tena tasya nāṭayavedasya arthaḥ tatpadair eve saṁkṣipyatjuvṛttiyā kriyate iti* "As the treatise on *Rasa* is scattered, ill-arranged and exhaustive the ignorant are likely to be confused; therefore the information of the *nāṭya-veda* is presented here abridged in the original words and arranged systematically." From the use of the words *nāṭya-veda* and *rasa-sāstra* it is clear that Bharat's *Nāṭya-sāstra*, as available today, is being referred to. It is equally clear that neither Dhanañjaya nor his commentator Dhanika likes the introduction of *rasa-s* in a book on dramaturgy.

(iii) *āhāryābhinaya* (XXIII) and (iv) *sāttvika* or *sāmānyābhinaya* (XXIV)

In XXIII the *āhāryābhinaya* is described. That phrase seems to include the "make-up" of the characters as well as the stage-setting (XXIII-1). In the next chapter, the last i. e. the *sāttvika* abhinaya is described. The following three chapters—XXV, XXVI and XXVII—describe miscellaneous things like the characteristics of the various characters, the *citrābhinaya* (a more or less insipid repetition of and minor additions to the chapters on *āṅgikābhinaya*) and sundry details like directions to or description of the audience etc. In the next six chapters the various musical instruments, tunes etc. are described. The only thing to be noted here is the opening of XXVIII in the style of a commentator and in prose, as :—

*ātodyavidhim idānīm vyākhyāsyāmaḥ, tad yathā;* "now we shall explain the rules on musical instruments" etc.

Once again the different characters (types of standardised ones) with their various functions are described in XXXIV and XXXV. In the last chapter XXXVI—the names of the sages who are asking questions to Bharata are enumerated (a bold and brilliant afterthought!). The *pūrvā-ranga* is once again described and finally the glory of drama, of Bharata and his sons

and descendants and heirs and successors is sung. The curtain drops, as if wearily, after a verse in the longest—sragdharā—metre and in the fashion of later *bharata-vākyas*. In writing such a long and dragging work perhaps Bharata had improved his poetic capacity enough to write a single verse in the longest metre !

### B. CRITICISM OF THE INFORMATION IN THE N. S.

From the summary above one thing is clear, that the present *Nātyasāstra*, far from being the earliest, is quite a later composition. The accurate analysis, the copious information and the critical vein ( though concealed ) presume the earlier existence of numerous plays and numerous attempts to understand them. It is evident that at the time the *Nātyasāstra* assumed its present form Drama had established itself as a popular and a regular feature in social life. What does it matter whether Bharata wrote it or was merely responsible for it as long as the book holds up Drama to the admiration of the readers and as the only entertainment common to all, irrespective of caste and culture ? No wonder then that regular and well-constructed playhouses existed at this time. The book reveals a historical sense in describing the different types of playhouses. In the early days, such shows might have taken place in the open. But, says Bharata, the demons took it into their heads to create disturbances. So it was considered advisable to construct well-guarded places ( I. 55-79, II. 1-27 ). On certain occasions, if the Manager or Patron so decided, plays were represented in the open ( XIV 64 ). The time of the day, too, was prescribed for performances. Generally speaking, midnight, noon-time, twilight and meal-times were prohibited ( which shows that Bharata had an eye on the business side of Drama ! ). The actual times were fixed as under<sup>5</sup> :

- (i) A play which is pleasant to the ears and based on tradition<sup>6</sup> is to be represented during the earlier part of the day ( *pūrvāhṇa* );
- (ii) A play wherein the sattva quality (in acting and representation) predominates and where there is plenty of instru-

5. XXVII 89-93.

6. Cf. *itihāso mayā srṣṭah sureṣu niyujyatam* ( I-19 ). The very first production is called *itihāsa* ( = tradition ).

mental music—is to be staged in the latter part of the day ( *aparāñha* ) ;

(iii) A play in the *kaiśiki* style dealing with *sṛngāra rasa* and with plenty of music and singing is to be staged early at night (i. e. immediately after sunset) ; and

(iv) A play of high sentiments, treating mostly the *ka'uṇa rasa* is to be staged in the morning.

Attempts have been made to show that this time-allotment is more or less based on scientific and hygienic and psychological considerations. In spite of their ingenuity, these attempts presume too much to convince. As a matter of fact, it appears that the four-fold division above relates to the four different types or styles or *vṛttis* of drama. The play referred to in (i) is obviously the *bhārati* type; that in (ii) is *sāttvati* more or less; the third is certainly *kaiśiki*; and the last, if not *ārabhaṭi*, is one that is different from the first three. We have shown in an earlier place<sup>7</sup> that the traditional and continuous stages in the evolution of Sanskrit drama were *bāhraṭi*, *sāttvati*, *kaiśiki* and *ārabhaṭi*. Further we are told in I-17 what each of the four Vedas contributed to the making up of drama. Let us place all this information side by side :

1. <i>bhārati</i>	Recitation	Rgveda	pāṭhya	pūrvāñha
2. <i>sāttvati</i>	Recitation with gestures	Sāmaveda	chanting	aparāñha
3. <i>kaiśiki</i>	Impersonation	Yajurveda	abhinaya	early night
4. <i>ārabhaṭi</i>	Representation	Ātharvāṇa	rasa	early morning

It will be seen from the above that style has more to do with the time of performance. Where there is mere recitation, the earlier part of the day is more suitable both from the reciter's as well as the listener's point of view. Early morning, fresh and energetic, is as suited for emotional acting. Where gesture plays an important part the light of the advanced day ( *aparāñha* ) is more convenient. Similarly, for impersonation to be successful ( especially with the conveniences of those days ) night-time is the best. Bharata, however, prescribes only

early night for two reasons: (i) ladies take part in plays of *kaiśiki* style and (ii) the type of the playhouses was not suited for night performances. Nowhere in the text do we read of a roofed playhouse. Under these circumstances night performances were possible—unless a play was staged for the *élite* within the four walls of a well-lit palace or mansion. Bharata, however, mentions with a touch of humour (conscious or unconscious) that he is opposed to night-representations on principle! Drama, he says, would be the destroyer of sleep (*nātyam* *nidrā-vinaśanam*, XXVII 92). Let us only hope that the sage is too sincere to insinuate.

Open or closed, the problems of the playhouse did not seriously affect the staging. A dramatic representation was as desirable as any other ritual and as much, if not more, entertaining. Not only was the drama a divine inspiration drawing from the four holy Vedas but the incidents (*vṛtta*) and the treatment (*vṛtti*) in it were equally divine in origin and conception. The very first production viz., the *samavakāra* called "the Churning of Nectar" dealt with the doings of the gods (IV-4). The second show—a *dīma* variety—dealt with the burning of the Three Walls by God Śiva (IV-11). Further, in the very early stages Śiva himself undertook the task of introducing music and dance in the performance. Similarly, the various *vṛttis*, i. e. the modes of treatment originated from the fight of Divine Lord Acyuta with the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha (XXII 2ff). It is no wonder that drama, under such auspices, should soon develop into ten varieties, though it is a wonder that no new varieties were introduced by the dramatists or recognised by the critics ever since. Perhaps the later dramatists were less original or the later critics less observant or the sanctity attached to Bharata's name was too solemn to allow any departures. As for Bharata himself, he enumerates and classifies and defines and explains the ten varieties. Incidentally he has pointed out some general features (XXI). Thus any play, in general, has five main ways of knitting (*samdhī*) its incidents. To open with, the story of the play is narrated in outline (*mukha*); the particular incident or incidents that give rise to a dramatic situation should then be introduced (*prati-mukha*); afterwards should be described the situation that heightens the dramatic sense by

coming in conflict with or contrast to the preceding incident (*garbha*) ; a dramatic way should be suggested to steer through this conflict (*avimarsa* or *vimarsa*) ; and finally the desired end should develop (*nirvahana*) We do admire Bharata for his power of observation and understanding. It will appear, however, that here Bharata has done nothing great except coining some technical words. The five stages of development mentioned above are just the five members of a syllogism in Indian logic. In a logical syllogism there is first the *pratijñā*, a statement or a sort of enunciation of the thing to be proved. A *hetu* or a logical reason is then stated. Thirdly, there is a *dṛṣṭānta* or analogy which is applied (*nigama*) in the fourth statement to the thing to be proved with the result that the thing is proved (*siddhānta*). Likewise, according to Bharata, the dramatist first summarises the developments in his play (*mukha*), then cites an incident which would bear out such a development (*pratimukha*), gives examples similar or dissimilar (*garbha*), equates the example to the problem in hand (*avimarsa*) and thus arrives at the promised development (*nirvahana*). This logically strict analysis, as will be shown later, was responsible for a series of stereotyped plays. Perhaps Bharata did not realise that art was not logic but magic, that it was not fixed but fresh in form and power.

### (C) PRE-BHARATA DRAMAS.

It cannot be supposed that Bharata produced this analysis without any models before him; nor should it be held that from the very beginning plays were written in Sanskrit with such an artistic treatment. We have already suggested the probable stages of the development of early Sanskrit Drama. A closer study of Bharata's ten varieties of representations supports that suggestion of ours to a great extent. Of the ten varieties four are of the simplest type; not that they are mere short sketches but the mode of treatment in these four—the *anka*, the *prahasana*, the *thāna* and the *vīthi*—is elementary. Each of these four has only two of the five *samāhi*-s or ways of development viz., the first and the last. That means than none of these is in any way different from mere recitation. Bharata himself adds explicitly that *anka* should have the *bhāratī* or the recitational style (XX 100). The other three also are probably in the

*bhāratī* style.<sup>8</sup> As an artistic improvement on these four we have the *vyāyoga* and the *īhāmṛga*. These have no *garbha* and *avimarsa sandhis*. A story is told, an incident represented and the play ends. The *īhāmṛga* deals with heavenly men and women (XX 82) and the *vyāyoga* with a well-known hero and a few female characters (XX 94). Battles are to be represented in both (and probably these battles are described in songs). The *samvakāra* and the *dīma* are a further improvement. They lack only one *samdhī* viz., the *avimarsa*. We have already seen that Bharata mentions these two (IV 4, 11) as the "first" dramatic representations. By "first" it is not meant that they are the earliest of the ten varieties. Before these, there was no "impersonation"—and so probably Bharata does not include them among representational performances. Lastly, we have the *nāṭaka* and the *prakarana*. These two have all the five *samdhī*-s. A true-to-life representation (i. e. an attempt for it) might be believed in at this stage. Let us, now, arrange the ten varieties as under :

Source :	Mode :	Varieties :	Stage :
R. V.	Bhāratī	aīka, bhāṇa, vīthi, prahasana	1
S. V.	Sāttvati	vyāyoga, īhāmṛga	2
Y. V.	Kaiśiki	samavakāra, dīma	3
A. V.	Ārabhatī	nāṭaka, prakarana	4

How does the above arrangement help us to find out the dramatist predecessors of Bharata ? The answer to this question will, under the present circumstances, be more a reasonable guess than a dogmatic decision. With later works on dramaturgy like the D. R. and the S. D. no difficulty arises since their authors or commentators explain their observations with reference to particular plays. No such satisfaction can be had in the N. S. Nevertheless there are situations which are provoking or tempting in this respect. For example, in XIII are described the various gestures to represent certain movements. In XIII 88 we are told how a chariot-rider and a charioteer are to be represented as moving on their ride. In

S. Cf. D. R. III 50.

XIII 90 the author tells us how a ride in the sky or atmosphere are to be shown by bodily gestures. In sanskrit plays we are not certain that a chariot passes through the atmosphere anywhere except in Act VII of Kālidāsa's *Abhijñāna-Śākuntalam* and the first act of *Vik.* Similarly in XIX Bharata is giving suggestions for the names of certain characters in plays. With reference to the name of a courtesan he suggests,

dattā mitrā ca senā iti veṣyānāmāni kārayet (73)

"The name of a courtesan ( should end ) in -dattā, -mitrā or -senā." ( XIX-33 ).

Though the first two types of names are common in Sanskrit plays both for courtesans as well as court-ladies, the last occurs only in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* of Śūdraka where the courtesan-heroin is named *Vasanta-senā*.<sup>9</sup> Again if Bharata says that death should not be represented on the stage there is stronger reason to believe that he must have known, and felt what it is to see death on the stage in a play like the *Ūrubhaṅga* ascribed to Bhāsa. Whatever that be, we hasten to repeat that this is not strong evidence ( perhaps no evidence ) to arrive at a conclusion. At the same time, it is undeniable that Bharata did have some 'standard' plays before formulating his rules. We know of no other earlier 'standard' plays than those of Bhāsa, Kālidāsa and Śūdraka. If, however, the author of the N. S. is deliberately concealing such references in order that his book be claimed ( and acclaimed ) most antiquarian we refuse to be critical and to spoil the humour of the situation. We will bear in our mind, but we shall not mention it aloud, that the author of the available version of the N. S. does know the plays of Bhāsa, of Kālidāsa and of Śūdraka.

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9. In the play *Cārudatta* ascribed to Bhāsa this character is simply called *nāyikā* ( heroine ).

CHAPTER IX  
THE DOCTRINAIRE DRAMA

Comparative study of Rasa Theory and Western Theory  
of Conflict in Drama—

I

In Indian tradition Drama is considered to be a narration of actions and emotions as observed in the world. Bharata to whom is attributed the authorship of the first treatise on drama viz. the *nātyasastra* uses two phrases in this connection: one is *karmabhāvānudarshana* and the other is *karmabhāvānukirtana*. It is not mere narration *anukirtana* but representation *anudarshana* that distinguishes drama from the other forms of literature. It is interesting to note that speaking of the Western Drama Dr. Allardice Nicoll speaks in identical terms. "The Drama" says Dr. Nicoll, "stands away from pure poetry in that it is primarily an art-form that makes its appeal to a precise and often limited body of spectators". In other words, drama, as both the Western and Indian critics seem to agree, is a *drśyakāvya*.

The other equally authoritative work on dramaturgy, viz. the *Daśarūpaka* of Dhanañjaya goes further and says

avasthānukrutir nātyam rūpam drsyatayocyate (I-8) (74)  
" Drama is an imitation of various actions and it is called Rūpa (-ka) because it is represented (lit. could be seen) ." Drama, strangely enough, comes from a Greek word meaning " action ". Aristotle, the Father of Western literary criticism, says " The epic... and tragic poetry, and moreover comedy, and dithyrambic poetry..... are all entirely imitations..... imitators imitate those who do something..... Tragedy, therefore, is an imitation of a worthy or illustrious and perfect action ". Imitation and action thus seen to be, according to both the Western and the Indian standard of criticism, the distinctive features of drama.

Such an agreement regarding the basic concepts of drama seem to convey as if the Western and Indian dramatic theory are mutually inspired or that one has been influenced by the other. We know the pre-christian date of Aristotle; we do not know when Bharata lived if at all such an individual did live. For this reason it has been easier and safer for scholars to believe

that Indian drama was influenced by the Greek drama. It is true that in Indian tradition Bharata is considered to be almost next in generation to God Brahma whose book he is supposed to have abridged into his *Nātyāśāstra*; but this is hard to believe since every first work of authoritativeness is supposed by Indians to be as old as creation. Dr. A. B. Keith therefore felt no difficulty in disbelieving the antiquity of Bharata and giving his authoritative conclusion that Sanskrit Drama originated under the influence of Greek Drama.

This is not the place to discuss the pros and cons of Dr. Keith's thesis. But even in those early days there were a few scholars who were not convinced and now, it may be safely asserted that whatever its validity in the light of the early studies, Dr. Keith's opinion is untenable. As early as 1912 a German scholar, E. P. Horowitz, makes in his book, *The Indian Theatre*, the following observations regarding Greek influence on Sanskrit Drama :—

“ But no direct proof whatever can be adduced that any Hellenic influence was brought to bear upon the Indian Drama which has a thoroughly national foundation. On the contrary, there are weighty reasons for disbelieving in such influences, for Greek and Hindu plays diametrically differ both in arrangement and principle. The Greeks recognize, whereas, the author of *Sakuntala* ignores, unity of time and place. The Greek chorus, in the character of a moral judge, is entirely unknown in his ( Kalidasas' ) productions. On the other hand, the happy blending of tragic and comic incidents which is characteristic of Indian as of Shakespearean plays is altogether against the rules of the Athenian Stage ” ( p. 77 ). The words that “ Indian Drama which has a thoroughly national foundation ” justify the rather lengthy quotation. Mr. Horowitz says that Greek and Hindu plays diametrically differ both in arrangement and principle. It is my present subject here to discuss one such difference and to see how far, if at all, it is a difference “ in principle.” That difference concerns the *rasa* theory in Indian dramaturgy.

The *Nātyāśāstra*, in describing the genesis of drama, says that drama though it instructs as literature in general, is characteristically “ an entertainment ” ( *vinodana* ). It should afford

rest to those that are tired (*viśrāmajanana*). To be able to do this, says Bharata, the drama must be enjoyed (*āsvāda*) by the audience—Is this enjoyment something more than, some thing above the “entertainment”? Yes, says Bharata, and gives a homely example to make his point clear. In a meal there are different foods with different tastes. Each taste gives you its own pleasure; but over and above these individual tastes is a general feeling of enjoyment. This he calls *rasa*. A drama to be enjoyed must have *rasa*. As a matter of fact “in this world”, according to Bharata, “nothing exists or excels without *rasa* : *Iha loke rasādṛte na hi kaścitpravartate*.

As explained above, the idea of *rasa* seems to be a simple one. But it was not allowed to remain so by a number of scholars, critics and thinkers from the 7th to the 10th century A. D. The idea of *rasa* which Bharata explained in connection with Drama was found so good and reasonable that later scholars decided to apply it to poetry as well. Here it was not so readily accepted and in trying to prove or disprove it Grammarians (*Vyāiyākaraṇi*), Dialecticians (*Mimāmsaka*), Logicians (*Naiyāyika*) and philosophers (*Dātṛśhnikā*) made it as complicated as possible. The idea of *rasa* as formulated by Bharata, in the course of centuries, was not fully accepted even by Dhanañjaya, who in his *Daśarūpaka* claims to continue only Bharata’s tradition. *Rasa* is the essence of drama (*Rupakam rasāśrayam*) according to Dhanañjaya. At the same time *rasa* is not so essential as to affect the story. On the other hand neither plot nor technique is justified in obscuring *rasa* (*Rasam vā na tirodadhyādvastvalankāra lakṣaṇāṇi*). In other words, the main effect of a drama is to ensure that the spectators enjoy the *rasa*.

That the ultimate verdict on a play would be from the point of view of the spectators is the main corollary of the *rasa* theory. Dhanañjaya says as much when he explains the *rasa* theory in the 4th chapter.

rasah sa eva svādyatvā drasikasyaiva vartanāt  
nānukāryasya vṛttatvāt kāvyasyāt paratvatah (75)

“*Rasa* is that which is made enjoyable by the behaviour of the appreciative spectator himself, it is not the behaviour of the

characters that gives enjoyment because the object of the drama is not to enjoy the behaviour of characters since that belongs to the past." (Otherwise, says the author, the spectator might as well himself fall into love with the heroine).

Still more illuminating is the following Kārikā.

kridatām mṛṇmayaīh ydvadbālānām dviradādibhih  
svotsāhāsvādatā tadvat śrotṛnām arjunādibhiḥ (76)

"The spectators enjoy at the sight of characters like Arjuna and others what they themselves feel inside just as children enjoy, playing with clay elephants, the fervour that is within themselves."

The characters of a play are like the clay elephants. In themselves there is nothing to enjoy. Enjoyment comes from what the children themselves feel within; so, believing in rasa theory, we have to view the play from the only direction from which it is meant to be viewed, viz., from the auditorium.

The very essence of *rasa* theory is enjoyment by the audience, *rasa iti kah padārthaḥ*, what is this thing called *rasa*? asks Bharata and then himself replies in one word, *āsvādyatvāt* because it is being enjoyed. If the audience is expected to do this, it means that Bharata's audience must pay a higher price to see a dramatic show. He says as much in the following words :

nānābhāvā abhinaya vyajitān vāgamgasatvopetān  
sthāyibhāvān āsvādayanti sumansah prekṣakāh (77)

There are many words that are new at this stage of our discussion, so let us only look to the last three words in which the spectators that enjoy are qualified as sumanasah. i. e. people with good or intelligent or discriminative minds. This is the second corollary of the *rasa* theory. If the spectators are not qualified, as the children are when playing with clay elephants, with a mind capable of enjoying, there would be no *rasa* at all. It is important to observe who, according to Bharata, could be considered a spectator of a play. I quote those lines in full with no need for an apology.

avyagrairindriyaih śuddhah ūhāpohaviśāradāḥ  
vyaktadośoanurāgī ca sa nātye prekṣakah smṛutah

yastuṣṭe tustimāyātī ūkē ūkamupaiti ca  
 dainye dīnatvamaśyeti sa nāṭye prekṣakah smṛutah  
 naveaivete guṇāssarvam ekasmin prekṣake smṛtāh (78)

Let us presume a spectator as described by Bharata and let us admit that he enjoys. What does he enjoy ?. Bharata says that he enjoys a *sthāyibhāva*. This *sthāyibhāva*, as further explained in the *Daśarūpaka* (iv-1), becomes enjoyable (*svādya*) through *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *sātvikabhāva* and *vyabhicāribhāva*. This reads more as a combination of alliterative words than any explanation unless we understand the correct meaning of all those words. But more important than understanding the meaning is to understand the idea—and let us try to do this latter.

For a moment, let us forget the ideal spectator and his *āswāda* of a *rasa*. Let us take an example from every-day life. Let us imagine four children cowering before their father who is mercilessly beating the fifth child. Each of the four children is looking at the father; one child with drooping shoulders and biting his under-lip; another one with dilated eyes and half open mouth and trembling lips; the third one with his body stiffened and teeth tightened; and the last one closing and unclosing both his fists and with drops of perspiration on his forehead but with a dry tongue licking both his lips. It is obvious from the description that all the four youngsters are in the grip of fear. Though each one of them is overcome with fear the responses to the sense of fear of each one is different from those of the other; two or more responses of each are described above. If we look a little more closely at the responses of each, we find, though it seems strange, that despite the difference there is a similarity. The drooping shoulders of the one, the dilated eyes of the other, the body stiffening of the third and the drops of perspiration of the last are all similar in one respect, viz. they are the immediate responses, or, in other words, they are responses that can be called automatic or responses which show themselves without the boys thinking about them. On the other hand, biting the under-lip, trembling of the lips, tightening of the teeth and closing and unclosing of fists are not spontaneous but volitional. An attempt to cry suppressed, tears withheld, provocation to action checked and some such activity

on the part of the children is clearly indicated. In other words these are responses knowingly or wilfully exhibited. And yet, each one of them is equally immobilised by the sense of fear. An hour or so later, neither the dilated eyes nor the trembling lips would show themselves while the sense of fear may remain with the boys for a long time to come. Because it is so, the sense of fear is called by Bharata a *sthāyibhāva* i.e. an emotion which stays or remains for a long time. In the meanwhile, there were other responses as we have seen, responses which could not be helped and responses which were results of conscious efforts. Responses that are automatic will not vary because they are usually natural or bodily responses. These, in Bharata's theory, are called *anubhāva*. The other group of responses viz. the results of efforts may and do vary since one might half open his mouth and the other tightly shut it, both in an effort not to give out a cry. Because they vary, Bharata calls these as *samcāri* or *vyabhicāribhāva*. Only one thing we have left out, viz stimulus for these responses. What made the boys react like that? Obviously, the sight of their father beating their brother. The action of the father or the particular sight is the stimulus, which, according to Bharata, is the *vibhāva*. The ordinary example, of every-day experience can now be expressed in terms of Bharata's *rāsa* theory as follows :

The *vibhāva* of father beating one of their brothers, the *anubhāva* of perspiration etc. and the *vyabhicāribhāva* of moistening the lips etc. produces the *rāsa* of *bhaya* in the four children.

This, however, would raise a further doubt. Bharata says that *rāsa* is an enjoyment; according to Bharata the sense of fear is a *sthāyibhāva*; nevertheless could it be said in justice or fairness to the four boys that there was " enjoyment " for them in what they expressed ? " Enjoyment " usually conveys a sense of joy or pleasure. But surely there was no pleasure for the boys ! Here we come to the last point in *rāsa* theory; viz. enjoyment or *āswāda* means losing one's own identity, and not pleasure in the ordinary sense. And a member of the audience, to go back to Bharata's specification, is required to have that quality. The discriminating or appreciative spectator is described as *sahradaya*, *sumanas*; he is also described as *Varnanīya-tanmayībhavanayogya*.

How does this theory of *rasa* affect the form of Drama? Let us first see what drama means from a spectator's point of view since the theory gives first consideration to the Spectator. Drama must be a definite story in the sense that it should describe events. Secondly, there should be movement in it in the sense that it must have a beginning and an end. Thirdly, what is seen with the eyes must be such as could be believed, even for the time being in the context of what happens. But all this will have to be sub-servient to a particular *rasa*. Neither the characters, nor the events, nor the time-element is important in itself except as a *vibhāva* i. e. as a stimulus leading finally to the spectator losing his identity in any one of the eight or nine *sthāyi-bhāvas*. As far as the spectator is concerned no other purpose was expected of a drama. It is true that Indian dramaturgy recognises different types of heroes and heroines, different technical devices like *viśkambhaka*, *pravesaka* etc., different types of stories with accordingly different number of acts; but all this is mainly in view of leading to a *rasa*. No varieties like tragedies or comedies could be recognised. There could be no unhappy ending since that would jar on the *rasāsvāda*, or disturb a spectator enough to prevent him from becoming one with the story.

The characteristics of Indian Drama are thus determined by the *rasa* theory. It is oftentimes asserted that rules of Indian Dramaturgy hindered the progress of Sanskrit Drama and subservience to the *rasa* theory turned more Sanskrit plays into a type of dull stereotyped didactic pieces. Drama as distinguished from poetry, must have more movement and less narration or description while in Sanskrit plays the opposite situation obtains. The *rasa* theory is supposed to have introduced into Sanskrit dramas more poetry and less drama. It must be admitted that acquaintance with Western drama gave voice to this kind of criticism. The subsequent development of *rasa* theory in poetics and as applicable to poetry--made us forget that originally *rasa* theory was mainly in the context of drama and that it was not true that purely poetical canons were transferred to drama. And, finally, it was believed that the *rasa* theory missed the very dramatic quality viz. movement and conflict by subordinating characters, development, action etc., which could be more enjoyed visually by an audience composed of

different elements to *rasa* which could be enjoyed by a select group of sahṛdaya persons acquainted with rhetorics.

## II

W. H. Hudson, an English Critic, said fifty years ago in his book, *An Introduction to the study of Literature*; " Every dramatic story " arises out of some conflict—some clash of opposed individuals, or passions, or interest ..... The struggle may, for example, be waged by the hero against fate or circumstances, as in *Oedipus the king*, or against the code or conventions of society as in *Antigone*, *Le Misanthrope*, *An Enemy of the people*; or the collision of the hero with outer antagonistic forces may be involved with and even largely subordinated to the inward struggle which goes on in the nature of the man himself ..... as in the case of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, of *Nora* in *A Doll's House*. Some kind of a conflict is, however, the very backbone of a dramatic story. With the opening of this conflict the real plot begins; with its conclusion the real plot ends." These words leave us in no doubt regarding the relation of conflict with drama. Though the examples mentioned are almost one and all only from such plays that we now consider as tragedies, the critic asserts that without conflict there can be no drama at all.

In Western dramatic criticism, this opinion has been accepted as a basic principle of drama. It is interesting to find out when and how such an opinion formulated itself. Tragedy, from which alone the idea of conflict seems to have originated, was considered by Aristotle, as we have seen earlier, an imitation of a worthy or illustrious and perfect action; and of the six main parts of drama viz. Fable, Character, Diction, Thought, Decoration and Music Fable was considered to be the most important. As Fable meant imitation of action and included in its meaning the composition of incidents, it may be said that Action itself was considered more important. If, now, Western criticism, developed from Aristotle's principles, says that conflict is more important, we would be justified in understanding that the idea of conflict goes back to the idea of action. It should be noted that by using the word conflict we are restricting action to when it involves a struggle; conflict is not just bringing together two opposing elements but actually setting one against the other.

The examples above leave us in no doubt in that regard. A French critic, Ferdinand Brunetiere (19th century), in his book, Law of Drama, says, "In drama or in farce what we ask of the theatre is the spectacle of a will striving towards a good and conscious of the means it employs". The two words, "will", and "conscious", make it very clear that the hero does not find himself caught up unawares in a struggle with some force, inner or outer, but willingly and knowingly chooses his weapons and battles. In saying this Brunetiere is apparently trying to extend the theory of conflict both to tragedies and comedies, according to whether the battle is lost or won.

This, in essence, is the theory of conflict in drama. Its obvious justification lies in the fact that it satisfactorily explains the greatness of tragedies like those of the Greek dramatists and of Shakespeare as well as, to some extent, that of some comedies of Bernard Shaw, for example. At the same time, this theory seems to give us not so much the definition as the design of drama. "With the opening of the conflict the real plot begins; with its conclusion the real plot ends". These words of Hudson tell us that the plot of a drama must aim at resolving a conflict with which it starts; and, secondly, start it must with a conflict. If this were the essential characteristic of a drama, then to begin with the dramatist finds himself restricted, in theory, to one and only one kind of plot; not only that; the main objective of his play must be to resolve some kind of a conflict. It is one thing to say that the theme of conflict has given us some of the best dramas (mostly tragedies) but quite another to insist that conflict alone could be the theme of a good drama.

If the early Greek poets wrote tragedies pitting human endeavours against Fate, perhaps they had reasons in their own times and conditions; if Shakespeare introduced plenty of action in his plays, it is likely that his audience had a large share in deciding it for him. In early Greece as well as in Elizabethan England, the audience normally included untutored, unruly and oftentimes uncultured rabble. Action involving conflict and clash, apart from any theory, would be a pleasing sight to such an audience. This pleasure of the audience is entirely different from the "enjoyment" which the audience experiences according to the *rasa* theory. The one excites while the other enraptures.

If, however, we observe how the conflict theory concerns more with the structure than the essence of drama, then we see a very close resemblance between the western and the Indian Drama. A dramatic story, according to the conflict theory, has a five-fold structures :

- (1) Initial incident in which the conflict originates,
- (2) Growth of action or complication intensifying the conflict,
- (3) Turning point where chances of success show,
- (4) Denouement, where events leading to success are marked out,

and (5) Conclusion in which the conflict is resolved.

This is surprisingly similar to the structure of a Sanskrit play in which also are five stages or sandhis as they are called.

(1) First is the *mukha-sandhi* which not only has a small initial episode (*bija*) but also the conscious effort of the hero (*Ārambha*) consequent on that episode.

(2) Then we have a *pratimukha-sandhi* in which the first development of the initial episode (*bindu*) is followed by a suitable action of the hero (*prayatna*).

(3) Thirdly, we have a *garbha-sandhi* in which incidental to the initial episode, some other incidents happen (*patākā*) leading to complications (*prāptyāśā*).

(4) As the story progresses, the tide turns and now incidental things that are helpful (*prakari*) happen, enabling the hero to remove the obstacles in his way (*niyatāpti*) and,

(5) Finally, the objective indicated by the initial incident is discernible (*kārya*) and the hero achieves the desired end (*phalāgama*). This is known as *nirvahana-sandhi*.

To a first glance, there appear more similarities in the structures of Sanskrit and Western dramas, sometimes appearing almost identical. It may be noted that the idea of conflict is not entirely absent in Sanskrit drama. In the *garbha-sandhi* we have obstacles leading to complications and a kind of conflict may be understood between the hero's actions and the obstacles. In the Western drama conflict itself becomes the central theme while in Sanskrit plays it happens as if incidentally. If, however, we look at both a little more closely we find

an essential difference between the two structures. In the Western Drama the conflict is volitional on the part of the hero and every action arises out of or leads to the conflict. There is hardly anything extraneous. In Sanskrit plays, on the other hand, it is not only the hero's action and efforts but outside forces join hands to lead to the final result. For example, in the Śākuntalam, the *bija* or the initial episode which starts the play is King Duṣyanta going for hunt. If we take the bare story, we could say Duṣyanta meets Śakuntalā, falls in love with her, meets with obstacles and finally, the obstacles being removed, is united with her. But in the play, in addition to Duṣyanta's personal efforts, we find outside circumstances which are equally important to the development of the story. When Duṣyanta learns that he is in the vicinity of Kaṇva's hermitage he desides to see Kaṇva and pay his obeisance. That is the Ārambha. Immediately he is informed that Kaṇva himself is not in the Āshram but has gone to Somatīrtha. That is the bindu; it is also something helpful to the development of the story, but outside Duṣyanta's efforts. But Duṣyanta proceeds on the information to see Kaṇva's daughter. That is the prayatna. This, is the genesis of the five sandhis. There are two series of stages, the first called *arthaprakṛti* where events happen outside the hero, and the second called *avasthā* which refer to the hero's actions. In the Western Drama the *arthaprakṛti* and *avasthā* would not move in any sandhi i. e. harmonious combination; on the other hand, because of the importance attached to the idea of conflict, the two might come into conflict. Even in the case of Durvāsa's curse, neither the hero nor the heroine rises in conflict with it; on the other hand, a poor fisherman puts an end to that superhuman obstacle.

It is not the right place, nor it is a wise thing, to sit in judgment on which of the two is better, the *rāsa* theory or the theory of conflict in drama. Perhaps there could never be a final decision. Each people will evolve its own literature and this will be the result not only of the actual observations and experiences but of its philosophy, its tradition, its social manners, terrain and its surroundings as well as its mountains, rivers, rains and forests and many other factors that determine the conditions of the people's life. The Vedic Aryans, once they spread out on the nothern plain of India, found Nature normally bountiful

and bracing. The sub-continent was vast enough to feed and shelter all the invading hordes. Periodically there would be natural calamities like floods or earthquakes which had to be accepted. Apart from those, life was normally less of a struggle. Unhappiness was accepted with equanimity, happiness must be enjoyed during the interval. Fight against natural forces was found, from experience, to be out of question. This was the field in which Sanskrit arts, literature and philosophy developed. And this was in contrast with conditions in Greece and Europe, and this explains the distinctive quality of each literature.

In philosophy Indian Thinkers dreamed of a condition of supreme bliss where neither pain nor pleasure existed. The theory of *rasa* is in drama the equivalent of the theory of Ānanda in philosophy. The author of *Daśarūpaka* says as much when he concludes his work. *Rasa*, he says, can be enjoyed from any theme, why even in the absence of a theme at all.

These are his words :—

ramyam jugupsitamudāamathāpi nīcam  
ugram prasādi gahanam vikrutam ca vastu  
yadvāpyavastu kavibhāvakabhāvyamānam  
tannāsti yanna rasabhāvamupaiti loke (79)

“ The theme may be beautiful or ugly;  
noble or ignoble ; terrible or pleasing ;  
deep or deformed ; and there may not be  
any theme at all. But if a poet and Bhāvaksadṛhdaya

( appreciating ) audience can feel, there is nothing that will not end in *rasa* ”.

Though *rasa* was thus a state beyond pain and pleasure normally its ingredients came from the world of pain and pleasure. Convinced that pain and pleasure, happiness and misery and such other 'dvandwa' and as they were called were merely relative, the Sanskrit writers did not recognise any conflict as such. Even when defining the objectives of literature, these early rhetoricians say that literature tells us to live like Rāma and not to live like Rāvaṇa; there is no Rāma without a Rāvaṇa; there is no such thing as good except when contrasted with what is called evil. But real and permanent happiness was where neither good nor evil existed; real *rasa* was there

where actions and movements and laughing and crying all merged into one experience of ecstasy.

Finally, may be considered some factors that lent to the idea of conflict such significance as to be considered a theory of Drama. Early Greek plays were more of a religious than a dramatic performance. The stories of these dramas were stories of mythical heroes and gods who were the founders of the Greek nation. The audience knew the story well. No changes could be introduced into that story. Apart from the religious attitude of mind and the style, the only thing that could interest the audience was by keeping the hero un-informed of his end. A god or a mythical hero was bound to be good and yet he met his doom. The dramatist explained this by showing greater powers ranged against the hero. Since the end was already known to the audience, its own interest would lie in the story and progress of the conflict between the hero and the unseen Powers or Nemesis or Fate.

With the coming of Christianity and the consequent disappearance of the idea of fate, a change was inevitable in the construction of a drama. If a hero failed it was not because of Fate but for his weakness or sins and so a dramatic story became a story of the conflict either between a good and an evil person or between the good and evil characteristics within the same person. If a normally good man failed, then it was a tragedy, and if a bad man failed, it was a comedy. A Dramatist like Shakespeare further improved on it by constructing tragedies where neither the Greek Fate made the doom inevitable nor the element of surprise distracted the audience. Hamlet and King Lear were the architects of their own destruction—because they did not prove equal to resolve the conflict within their minds. In Western Drama, through various stages, this earlier influence of a trait of Greek drama has persisted in some form or other. Taking three plays as different from one another as Galsworthy's *Strife*, Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* and Ibsen's *Ghosts*—we find two forces set against each other. Action is Drama and a conflict always leads to action.

At the same time, whether it is a Greek play or a modern play, when we look at it from the dramatist's point of view the idea of conflict does not appear to be so important as to be

considered the very essence of drama. Just as you require light to see anything, you require a background to see and understand the characters and their action in a drama. Setting things against one another is as primitive a device as a necessary one. Background does not, and cannot, always or only mean something in conflict.

When we remember that, to put it in simpler words, a dramatist writes his drama because he feels he has something which must be shown to the audience and the audience sees a drama because it feels interested in what the dramatist shows, we realise that Bharata was more to the point when he said that drama must produce *rasa*; perhaps, what we have expressed above into simpler words, Bharata expresses by coining the technical word *rasa*. The idea of *rasa* explains a drama from two points at the same time, that of the dramatist and that of the audience while the idea of the conflict explains it mainly from the point of view of the audience.

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## CHAPTER XX

### THE PLAYS OF SRĪ HARŚA

GREAT WRITERS, as all other men, rise like the morning sun. They bring with them a freshness of feeling and vigour and vitality. They disperse before them the long accumulated darkness of the past and illuminate beneath them the path of future. And like the morning sun they cast a long shadow wherein the substance is given an appearance of undue prominence. In this respect great writers are a boon and a curse, a boon of life to the world and a curse of stagnation to literature. Prospero keeps Ariel as his prisoner. So does the genius keep the soaring young spirits as its prisoners. It is a great advantage to most modern societies that they are led by mediocrities. A genius that dazzles when seen also blinds in following. The study in an earlier chapter illustrates the general tendency of accepting great minds as standard for all times. The plays of Kālidāsa and his fore-runners were studied, analysed, and because they were felt as works of unusual merit, were held up as models to be copied. Kālidāsa is not to blame. The very example of a genius breaking down all shackles becomes a new and a stronger shackle to his admirers. Left to himself Kālidāsa would have advised (if he had no better business) any aspiring young writer in such words : "Live and live thy own life; see, feel and write." But the critics had the advantage of him and said, "see Kālidāsa, feel what *he* describes and repeat what *he* writes." No wonder that for a long time to come the history of Sanskrit as well as of some vernacular literatures is a race in imitating Kālidāsa and his class. In the fore-front of this race is His Majesty King Srī Harṣa of Kanoj who ruled about 610 A. D.—642 A. D.

Srī Harṣa is credited with the authorship of three Sanskrit plays—Priyadarśikā, Ratnāvalī and Nāgānandam. It is not of great interest to us whether the king himself or his court poets under their patron's name wrote these plays. Genius makes no pretence to the authorship of these plays, and between the patron king and his court poets like Bāṇa, the king has decidedly an advantage. He need not have written these plays and still we would have found out the poet in him. His adventures and his

accomplishments as a king ( and also as described in the *Harṣa-carita* of Bāṇa ) and as a connoisseur reveal a mind keenly susceptible to surroundings. In his life-time he had the privilege of belonging, by turns, to the two great religions of the day viz., Hinduism and Buddhism. His experience was varied and unusual. His father died; his only sister was lost and in searching her his elder brother died; his sister returned, widowed and wedded to Buddhism and left a deep impression on him. When quite a young man he was called upon to rule the kingdom. On his death he left behind him an Empire and three Sanskrit plays.

All the three plays—P. D., Rat. and Nāg.—show one hand through, and one mind behind, them gradually improving in craft and confidence. The two plays—P. D. and Rat.—deal with the story of that popular hero Vatsarāja or Udayana, king of Kauśāmbī. They are different from one another because their titles differ from one another, and the titles differ from one another because the names of the two heroines differ from one another. Essentially there is no difference between them and no justification for two of them. The superficial difference is due to the passage of time from the writing of the one to the writing of the other, P. D. opens in diffidence, develops into confusion and ends in chaos and convention. As the play opens, King Vatsa has escaped from prison along with Vāsavadattā, his wife. His general has defeated and killed Vindhya-kētu in the south and has brought with him Princess Priyadarśikā (heroine) mistaking her for the daughter of the slain adversary. In this disguise the heroine is left in the queen's tutelage. After a time the king sees her. She is now grown up and king Vatsa falls in love with her. Then follows the usual type of court intrigue under Vidūṣaka's auspices. A play written about the King is to be staged. Priyadarśikā is assigned the queen's rôle in the play. And here the real king gets the chance of making love to the heroine (as the play-queen). The intriguer is intrigued. Not interested in the play the Vidūṣaka goes to sleep and babbles out the truth. The queen is angry. Her anger is further incensed because the king has done nothing to save her uncle who has lost his kingdom and liberty. By the time the king asks forgiveness his general returns after successfully saving the queen's uncle and reinstating him. The queen is pleased at this gracious move on the part of her husband and returns it by set-

ting free the so-long imprisoned heroine. That girl, however, has swallowed poison in despair and is saved only by the magical powers (charms) of the king. If transpires ultimately that the heroine is no other than the daughter of the queen's uncle. In accordance with an earlier betrothal this love-marriage (?) is brought about by the queen herself.

A similar story with Kālidāsa has lent itself to a lovely dramatic treatment in the Mālav. But Harṣa's P. D. is too poor in execution. The whole of Act I is a sort of viṣkambhaka prosaically narrating the background of the play. In Act I the heroine does not appear on the stage at all. Act II is in imitation of Kālidāsa. The heroine goes to the pond and is tormented by the bees as Śakuntalā is and Vatsa, like Duṣyanta, steps forward to her help. When Priyadarśikā is calling for help the Vidūṣaka says :

bhavati, sakala-pṛthvī-paritrāṇa-samarthana-Vatsarājena  
 paritrāyamāṇā cetīm indīvarikām akrandasi (Lady, you are  
 being protected by Vatsarāj, the strong protector of the whole  
 world, and yet you call upon the maid Indivarikā for help);  
 when Śakuntalā too cries for help (A. Śāk. I) her friends tease  
 her by saying; ke āvām, paritrātum.....Daṣyantam ākranda.....  
 rāja-rakṣitavyāni tapovanāni nāma (who are we to protect you?  
 A hermitage is to be protected by the king. Call upon  
 Duṣyanta). The situation in A. Śāk. is more dramatic, more  
 genuine and more enjoyable since Duṣyanta is actually standing  
 there, known to the audience but not seen by the girls. In P.D.  
 not only the audience but the heroine also knows that she is  
 already in the arms of Vatsa. Again, in Act III we have a  
 play within the play. It has proved too much for the young  
 writer. The scene is laid (in the main play) near the pond  
 as the act opens and then is clumsily shifted to the preksāgāra,  
 the Music Hall of the palace! As the play-within-the play  
 proceeds, the Vidūṣaka, like his caste-fellow in the Mālav., goes  
 to sleep and mutters out the truth. The description of the music  
 (III-10) and the speech of the Kañcukin (III-3) are repeated word  
 for word in Nāg. I-14 and IV-1 respectively. In Act IV the hero  
 saves the heroine's life by means of his magical powers. Magical  
 powers are again introduced (though this time the hero is deprived  
 of them) in Rat. IV. As a matter of fact, it appears as if the author  
 wrote the Rat. simply to improve on and remove the defects in the

P.D. In the Rat. the heroine sees the hero in Act I as the latter is being worshipped by the queen while the hero and the heroine in the P.D. see each other for the first time in Act II. With only two Acts remaining there is less scope for development in the P.D. while in the Rat. the love-story proceeds briskly from the beginning of Act II. Nor was the dramatist prepared to write more than four Acts. The story demanded but the conventional rules refused more than four Acts to a *nāṭikā*. So like a street-artist harassed by a policeman, His Majesty Śrī Harṣa packs off his materials with inartistic hurry. Once again in P. D. III the heroine's friend tells the Vidūṣaka that the heroine is in love with the king; and the Vidūṣaka returns the compliment by telling as plainly that the king also is in love with the heroine. This is not even good story-telling, much less a dramatic situation. It will not do for a dramatist to forget that no character can speak to another character (except, in the case of bad acting) without being heard by the audience. Harṣa seems to have found this out since in Rat. II he tries to make an identical situation more dramatic but utilising a *mynā* bird. What the heroine tells her friend is heard by the *mynā* which repeats it later in the presence of the king. Similarly, the clumsiness of the play-within-the play of the P. D. is avoided in the Rat. where the heroine, through the cleverness of the Vidūṣaka, is brought in the disguise of the queen herself. For the same purpose of dressing the heroine in the queen's robes the dramatist had to use a play-within-the-play in the P. D. Lastly, Act IV of the P. D. is a hopeless jumble of events. In a similar situation in Rat. IV, the minister Yaugandharāyaṇa brings in a magician who sets the palace on fire, Vāsavadattā suddenly remembers that the heroine is fettered and the king immediately rushes to help. The fire was an illusion created by the magician. Otherwise, says Yaugandharāyaṇa, how could the king be brought to the heroine? Apart from that, the incident reveals the nobility of Vāsavadattā and the heroic love of the king for the heroine. In the P. D. two situations are introduced either of which could have brought about the freedom of the imprisoned heroine; the help rendered by the king to her uncle had put the queen in such a gracious mood that she was prepared to set the heroine free. Or, the heroine swallows poison which fact would have equally served the purpose. As it is, the attempted suicide is absurd.

and superfluous—unless the dramatist was keen to show that his hero was in no way inferior to a snake-charmer! The heroine however, found that it was too dangerous to attempt suicide at the end of the play and so, in the Rat., she tries that ruse in Act III. Not only that, the heroine of the Rat. is in the queen's robes while attempting suicide. The king ( hero ) thinking that the queen herself is committing suicide, rushes to her, takes her in his arms, protests his love and lo ! the real queen comes on the stage and detects, what she thinks, a treachery—the second one within a few minutes. This situation adds to the gaiety of the comedy. On the whole, the Rat. shows its author as a dramatist of no ordinary talents. The very ideas and situations of the P. D. are repeated in the Rat. but their exquisite polish in the latter shows not only the boldness but the originality of the artist. The attempt of Harṣa to write successfully within the restricted field of rules of dramaturgy was at last achieved in the Rat. Perhaps Harṣa was too good a king to set to his subjects a lesson in revolt by himself flouting the rules of dramaturgy; nevertheless, he seems to have made a bold attempt to break loose in originality. That attempt was a failure. So after having written Nāgānanda in that attempt he reverted to the early methods and rewrote his Priyadarśikā ; in other words he wrote the Ratnāvalī.

Nāgānandam is, of course, a play different from both Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī. The fact that the Nāgānandam deals with a hero who ends as a Buddhist is of no relevance. It is only in the last two Acts that the play takes a Buddhistic tone; in the first three the hero—Jīmūtavāhana—does not do or say what cannot be done or said by a non-Buddhist. What makes Nāg. different from the other two plays is the very basis of dramatic treatment. The two nālikā-s represent love within the court-life and the palace-walls. In the Nāg. love transcends fort-walls and national boundaries. It is love that we have met with in Kālidāsa's plays, especially in the A. Śāk. So, as in the latter, the opening scene in Nāg. is laid in a hermitage. The two plays run exactly on the same lines, the only difference being that the A. Śāk. is conceived by a master-mind. Jīmūtavāhana enters the hermitage, his right eye throbs ( cf. A. Śāk. I-14 ) he meets the heroine and the two fall in love. Love in Kālidāsa's play pours forth ' in profuse strains of unprome-

diated art'; in the Nāg. it is premeditated since Gaurī, her goddess, has told the heroine in a vision of the coming of the stranger lover. Mitrāvasu, the heroine's brother, comes to the hero with a proposal on behalf of his sister. Jīmūtavāhana demurs not knowing that the girl he has fallen in love with and the girl proposed are one and the same. The heroine seeing from cover all these attempts, in a fit of disappointment, attempts suicide. To make matters worse, the hero has just sketched the lady of his heart and Malayavatī, the heroine, does not know that it is herself. Jīmūtavāhana rushes to help and saves the girl. Now it is known that the heroine Malayavatī and the sister of Mitrāvasu and the girl sketched are all one and the same. The lovers run into each other's arms by the end of Act III the marriage is celebrated with the sanction of the hero's parents. In Act IV. Jīmūtavāhana comes to know of the sad plight of the Nāga-s (snakes) who are murdered in numbers by Garuda, the Celestial Hawk. To avert a total extinction of his race, the King of the Nāga-s makes an arrangement with Garuda to send to the latter, each day, one nāga (snake) to be devoured. The hero, wandering by the sea-shore, is moved by the wailing of a nāga-mother whose son is to be that day's victim. Jīmūtavāhana offers himself up in the place of that nāga and is carried away by the Garuda. In Act V the old parents and the wife of the hero come to know of his fate and prepare for self-immolation. In the meanwhile Garuda retires with the hero mortally wounded, admires the selflessness and the moral courage of his victim, recognises him as the great Jīmūtavāhana and finally relents and promises to stop his murderous activities. In the presence of his family and friends the hero succumbs to his wounds. Immediately the goddess Gaurī appears in answer to Malayavatī's prayer and brings the hero back to life. Garuda on his part fetches nectar from heavens and does more than he has promised by resuscitating all the nāga-s he had killed. Thus the play gets the title of Nāgā-nandam i.e. the *ananda*, bliss or resuscitation of the Nāgas. Let us imagine the *ananda* of Harṣa, too, who in imitation of the great Aśoka after his Kalinga campaign, might have promised, like the Garuda in the play, to cease his murderous activities and wars. It would not be fair otherwise.

What was the object of the dramatists in writing this play? It is usually held that Śrī Harṣa wrote it either to extol and

preach Buddhism, or that he wrote it when he himself had been converted to Buddhism. The Nāndī, opening verse, is a prayer to Buddha; in the body of the play the Brahmin fool Vidūṣaka is made ridiculous with his sacred thread torn and his ignorance held up to scorn. Such features are quoted in evidence of the Buddhistic tendency of the play. As for the fun poked at the Vidūṣaka we need not be so critical. Even in the apparently 'non-Buddhistic' Priyadarśikā Harṣa makes his hero ridicule the Vidūṣaka in these words; *veda-saṁkhyayā eva āveditam brāhmaṇyam*. "You have proved your Brāhmaṇhood by mentioning the number of Vedas."<sup>1</sup> The ignorance of the Vidūṣaka in this respect is the stock-in-trade of Sanskrit dramatists irrespective of their religion. Similarly, the opening prayer to Buddha does not necessarily convey that the author is a Buddhist. Buddha has a place among the ten incarnations. If Śrī Harṣa intended to sing the glories of Buddhism in this play he must be condemned as a very poor artist. The first three Acts of the play would be so disproportionate, the remaining two Acts so insufficient to convey the dramatist's intention. Secondly, a verse common to all his three prologues reads,

loke hāri ca bodhi-sattva-caritam

"The story of the Bodhi-sattva is popular."

But the story in the play is about Jīmūtavāhana. True, Jīmūtavāhana is mentioned in other authorities as a Bodhi-sattva and in the play itself Garuda speaks of the hero as a Bodhi-sattva.<sup>2</sup> It is rather strange that the hero should be referred to as Bodhi-sattva once only in the five Acts of the play. In other earlier plays Jīmūtavāhana was mentioned as Bodhi-sattva. And yet Śrī Harṣa does not insist. In these circumstances we are inclined to believe that our author had no idea of depicting a Buddhist hero. The conception of Universal Love in Buddhism came to the aid of Harṣa who wanted to depict Ideal Love by providing a hero from its pages. The background and the atmosphere in Act I make brilliant beginning for such a story of love. But by the end of Act III the play slipped through

1. Act II; of course, it need not be added that the Vidūṣaka mentions the Vedas as four, five and six. Cf. also Act II of Bhāsa's *Avimārakā* where the Vidūṣaka mentions Rāmāyaṇa as a treatise on dramaturgy!

2. *kim bahunā bodhi-sattva eva ayam mayā vyāpāditah VI.*

his fingers and descended to the level of an average love-story. In A. Śāk. Kālidāsa introduced a clever trick by taking Duṣyanta away to a field of apparently higher responsibility viz., the Kingdom. But our Buddhistic hero has lost his kingdom, can go nowhere and ultimately in Act III has to dismiss the heroine by describing her poetically in one verse. What is our hero to do when the author himself is at his wit's end? In a fit of desperation on the part of both dramatist and of his hero, the way of death had to be chosen. To show love at its highest the hero had to die; but he could not die a legitimate death since rules of drama prohibited it. So Harṣa had to fall back on a religious excuse. Jīmūtavāhana dies on the stage because he is a Bodhi-sattva.<sup>3</sup> He is not bound by the rules formulated by sages of Vedic cult. Thus the play closes as tamely as it opens brilliantly. And now the list of Harṣa's failures included both Priyadarśikā and Nāgānanda. We have shown above how the defects of the P. D. were improved upon in the Rat. Likewise, some of the unsuccessful artifices in the Nāg. are retouched in the Rat. The sketching of one lover (heroine) by the other (hero) in the Nāg. is utilised to better purposes and with greater effect in the Rat. The fooling of Vidūṣaka in Nāg. III with a bad pun on the word 'varṇ-' (to paint or to describe), the scenes of revelry again in Nāg. III are more picturesquely and more discreetly depicted in Rat. I.

On the whole, it appears that Harṣa was keen to improve. Even in his last play, however, there are serious blemishes. The unnecessary repetition at length of the dialogue between Sāgarikā and Susamgatā in Act II through myna bird is an illustration to the point. The king could have known it in any other way less annoying to the audience. Besides a monkey has to be introduced, let loose to bring about such a situation. What a monkey to upset and frighten the whole palace! True, Kālidāsa also lets a monkey loose in his Mālavikāgnimitram, but, it does not develop such frightful and fanciful consequences. This is one of the major defects of Śrī Harṣa as a dramatist. His art knows no economy.

The real trouble with Harṣa was that he was least qualified

3. Note the word 'bodhi-sattva' used only once in the play and that too when the hero is dead (*vyāpāditah*).

to be a dramatist. A knowledge, however thorough, of all the rules of dramaturgy is not in itself sufficient to write a good play. Śrī Harṣa, like most of the Sanskrit dramatists, borrows the story from an earlier source. But when it comes to re-telling it in a dramatic form he fails. His characters are mostly story-tellers and as such we are not interested in what happens to them. Even in three or four principal characters there is no life at all. Either they are dummies stuffed in the traditional form or they are the mouthpieces of the poetic author. We know beforehand what his characters are going to say and what we do not know would be irrelevant lyrical outburst. His *Vidūṣaka*, for example, has no individuality. He is not naturally a fool or as naturally a scoundrel as he should have been. On all occasions where he makes a fool of himself you can hear the author prompting and pushing behind. Similarly, except in the *Ratnāvalī* to some degree, the heroines of Harṣa are dull automata who submit to destiny in a ritualistic manner, submit to their lover in a conventional manner, and are married at last more out of pity for their helplessness than in the name of true love. With such a *Vidūṣaka* as his friend and such a heroine as his beloved the hero cannot but be a school-master; only he is more temperamental since he lives amidst luxury and beauty. From a corner of a stage, he declaims (i.e. dictates to the school-boys) poetic description of the scene, of the heroine, of sunrise and sunset at the end of Act I or II or III. To take an example, the whole of *Rat.* I is poetry, pure and simple. Of the eighteen long verses in the main scene no less than thirteen are sung by the king. He describes the festivities (5 verses), his queen (4 verses), and the evening (2 verses). The fact that Śrī Harṣa now and then rises to great poetic heights does not mitigate his defects as a dramatist. Whenever Harṣa finds that the play is not moving in action he hustles in characters like so many errand-boys and hustles them out with as much lack of tact and grace. Thus, to take an instance, in *Nāg.* IV, the hero is wandering along on the beach. He wonders what the mounds are. He pushes in *Mitrāvasu* to say that those mounds are not the Malaya ranges but heaps of *nāgas'* (snakes) bones. Then he explains the fate of the *nāgas*. No sooner is this information given (to the audience) than a messenger comes to say that *Mitrāvasu* is urgently wanted by his father. Why? Let the

servant himself answer; *pratihārah* :—( *karne* ) evam evam  
'Attendant:—(whispers) so-and-so. In other words, *Mitrāvasu*  
is packed off by the dramatist.

It is needless to add examples. The only marvel is how such a fine poet turned out to be such a poor dramatist. As a patron, he might have been pampered by the court-pundits; as a king, His Majesty might have less scope for insight and observation. But this is not all. What is more to the point is the artificiality of *Śrī Harṣa*'s dramas. He wrote plays, we are almost compelled to say, not because he wanted or felt to study the various aspects of life. Poetry to him was an accomplishment and not an urge; Drama with him was a product not of life but of learning—learning the rules on dramaturgy. Bharata says that his first performance was given on the occasion of Indra festival (N. S. I 56). So *Harṣa*'s *Nāgānandam* is staged, as is said in the prologue, on Indra festival day. Similarly, a *nāṭika*, treated in *Śringāra-rasa*, could be staged only at spring time; so the *P. D.* and the *Rat.* are staged on the occasion of the Spring festival. It is for this reason that *Śrī Harṣa* mentions in his prologues four requisites for a successful performance, viz., (i) a clever poet, (ii) an appreciative audience, (iii) skilled actors, and (iv) a popular story. Though it is gratifying to note that *Harṣa* takes only 25 p. c. credit for himself, it was an ill day that handed over one of the most popular forms of literature into the hands of a king. The rule of law and order was transferred to the realm of literature. Who knows if *Harṣa* did not employ some pedants to formulate new rules with reference to his plays alone and did not thus give his royal sanction, by writing in the decaying Sanskrit language, to the banishment of intellectual democrats and artistic anarchists ?<sup>4</sup>

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4. Unfortunately we have *Dhanika*, the commentator of *Dhananjaya's* *Dasarūpaka*, quoting and illustrating mostly from *Śrī Harṣa*'s plays.

## CHAPTER XXI

## A REVIVAL

(*Viśākhīdatta and Bhavabhūti*)

WE SAW in the last chapter that with King Śrī Harṣa, Sanskrit drama assumed a definite form and was already on its way to standardisation. The increasing distance between the written Sanskrit and its spoken dialects and the literary fashion set by such a powerful king turned Sanskrit drama into an intellectual luxury. We might even go further and say that immediately after Harṣa play-writing was placed on the curriculum of a poet's degree. We might imagine, on the analogy of the restoration period in England, a plethora of plays—small plays by small writers. Most probably the same theme viz., the love-affairs of a king satisfied the poetic fancies of each and every writer. At a time when play-writing is a literary fashion a poet as well as a philosopher or a grammarian can legitimately be expected to write a play. The result is inevitable. Drama ceases to be what it should be, both functionally and technically. That such was the case could be seen from the strong protests of two great dramatists after Harṣa. Viśākhadatta, the author of *Mudrā-Rākṣasa*, speaks of plays of bad writers which begin one way and end quite in another one, (*kukavi-kṛta-nāṭakasya iva anyanmukhē anyannirvahaṇे*). He is sick of pedants writing or taking interest in drama. In the prologue he tells us that he is writing his play for an audience that is particularly appreciative of (this branch of) literature (*kāvya-viśeṣa-vedinyām pārsadi prayuñjānasya*). He himself has studied drama in all its aspects. In a splendid passage (IV. 3) he compares a dramatist to a statesman. Both are capable of working on slender materials, or developing the same concealing at the same time the possibilities, and of keeping that development throughout under their control even as they raise therein intellectual problems. To write a drama you must be dramatist first and last—thundered the other writer viz. Bhavabhūti, the author of three plays:—the *Mahāvīra-carita*, the *Mālatī-Mādhava*, and the *Uttara-Rāmacharita*. “ You have studied the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣadas*, *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* lores ? Yes ? You think you are clever, don't you ? But know that all

your learning is of no use for play-writing. The powers of a good dramatist lie in his close observation, in his subtle and succinct style and in clever presentation." (MM. I 10). So he says of *Mālatī-Mādhava*, his social play, that the sentiments therein are depicted in all their subtlety, actions charming and reasonable and that though a love-story it has sense and dignity, and an unusual plot developed in a skilful dialogue. ( MM. 16 ) Bhavabhūti has correctly sensed the defects of earlier plays dealing with stupid, stereotyped and undignified love-plots in dull and unnatural accents. He reports his audience as tired of sickly love stories. " Let us have a play depicting the heroic sentiments of cultured minds, a clash of characters and the subtleties thereof." This is their request to the stage-manager of the *Mahāvīra-carita* ( I 2, 3 ).

From still another point of view these two dramatists seem to protest against Śrī Harṣa's type of play. From its very origin, as well as in the hands of playwrights like Kālidāsa and Śūdraka, drama was a product of contemporary social soil and surroundings. In popularising the *Nāṭikā* form, Śrī Harṣa introduced a style of romance that refused to face realities and persisted in following fancies. To Viśākhadatta and Bhavabhūti drama was essentially a social study, a presentation of the ways of the world—of *lokacarita*. So we find Viśākhadatta writing against historical background while Bhavabhūti takes most of his plots from the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* since it conformed, more than the *Mahābhārata*, to the Hindu type of family and other social institutions. It is true their stories are old but entirely new is the way in which they are told. Drama with these two writers is once again a presentation of Life as they saw and of the life that they saw. It is for this reason that the Cāṇakya in the MR. is not the traditional Cāṇakya, a self-seeking adventurer. In the play he is a constructive statesman whose one ambition is to place his country under a strong and uniform central authority. Viśākhadatta, a member of the ruling class, had not lived in vain at a time when his country was divided under petty and narrow-minded princes whose one business was to fight with the neighbour. " This country did never feel secure as long as the Nandas were ruling. Now it has been united under one sovereignty"—these words of Cāṇakya ( I-22 ) are a cry from the poet's heart. In the very last verse

of the play the author notes with agony his country preyed upon by the foreigners ( *mlecchair udvejyamāna* ).<sup>1</sup> " Let me not lose my intellectual powers which, to achieve an object, are far more efficacious than hosts of armies " ( I. 26 ). In this sentiment of Cāṇakya the dramatist is asking for a sound statesman in preference to a sound killer, otherwise known as a great conqueror or warrior. These warrior-kings with their hosts of armies, emulating the code of another time, had done their worst by fights and factions. Times are changed now. The rule of the country must be reflected not in the gory sword but in the feeling intellect of the ruler. Even the old rule that a Brahmin should counsel and a Kṣatriya should fight is no longer relevant. The professional Brahmin Cāṇakya is throughout the play earnestly seeking to win over Amātya Rākṣasa before making him the king's minister. In the very first speech Cāṇakya makes it clear. ( *ata eva asmākam tvatsamgrahane yatnah* . ) " That is why we are trying to win you over. "

Far bolder than those of Viśākhadatta are the changes and the adaptations that Bhavabhūti introduced in the episodes he selected from the epic. Of his three plays, two viz., the Mahāvira-carita and the Uttara Rāma-Carita are based on the Rāma story. Between themselves the two plays cover the life-story of Rāma from his education and marriage upto his second re-union with Sītā. ( It roughly extends over 26 years, 14 years in the Mahā. and 12 in the U. R. ). The poet's object is evident throughout. He attempts to interpret the life and actions of Rāma—unavoidably in the light of his own society and surroundings. The struggle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa—the core of the epic story—is a fight for supremacy as Bhavabhūti sees it in the Mahāvīra-Carita. Rāma as an ideal king is compelled to challenge Rāvaṇa, a powerful tyrant. The rākṣasas of the play are not the fantastic evil spirits of mythology. They are, one and all, well-behaved, human and reasonable in a way. Thus Mālyavān, the uncle of Rāvaṇa, is planning to get Paraśurāma, a Brahmin and an inveterate hater of Kṣatriyas, against Rāma. Here, as well as in Act IV, Mālyavān is a statesman

1 This sentiment would not be as true of the times of Cāṇakya as of after the downfall of Mauryan ( but more especially of the Gupta ) Empire. The author thus refers more probably to contemporary conditions.

who has a policy and a diplomacy. When the defeated Paraśurāma retires into the forest leaving the Daṇḍaka territory under Rāma's supervision, Mālyavān despatches Śūrpanakhā disguised as Mantharā, the hump-backed maid of Kaikeyi. Śūrpanakhā goes to Mithilā and asks Daśaratha for two boons he had promised to his favourite queen Kaikeyi; one that Bharata should be crowned heir-apparent to the throne; two, that Rāma should go in exile for 14 years with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. In the epic the above episode takes place in the palace of Ayodhyā where Mantharā instigates and then Kaikeyi asks. Bhavabhūti, however, has laid the scene at Mithilā and has entirely exonerated Kaikeyi from the sordid piece of cruelty and hatred by making Mālyavān and Śūrpanakhā responsible for the whole affair.

The episode of Rāma's marriage too is described in an original way. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa led by Viśvāmitra arrive at Mithilā where Janaka's brother accompanied by Sītā and Urmilā receives them. Rāma and Sītā fall in love at first sight. The marriage is practically settled. The ordeal of breaking Śiva's bow in twain is then gone through, as if formally. As a matter of fact, the breaking of this bow is made significant from an entirely different point of view (though in the epic it is a necessary preliminary to the marriage). Paraśurāma, a powerful Brahmin, feels personally humiliated and challenged since Śiva is his tutor. In Acts II and III the poet analyses the character of Paraśurāma in a masterly way. Should the Brahmins degrade themselves by taking, as Paraśurāma did, to the cruel profession of fighting? Was Paraśurāma justified in his efforts to exterminate the Kṣatriya race? Paraśurāma himself answered these questions after his defeat and humiliation in Act IV. "It was not in the least wise of me to behave as I did. My name and fame and family have been sullied by me alone. I had many faults in me; and yet you forgave me with a Brahmin's kindness. I have been defeated for my own arrogance and for my own good." (IV 22). Bhavabhūti himself was a good Brahmin of the South, which only shows that he was a better dramatist.

In being a better dramatist Bhavabhūti has a claim more to our sympathy than to our admiration. Like all original thinkers and great artists, he seems to have been misunderstood,

even ridiculed by his contemporaries. Literature and art are the only phases of life where democracy is a positive curse. The contemporaries of Bhavabhūti had their own ideals about drama—like the muddled-headed middle-class of all ages. Moreover, plays like those of king Śrī Harṣa had convinced them in their belief that drama, at its best, was a luxury and a pleasantry. Love to them was mere lasciviousness. When a Viśākhadatta writes about a prosaic Brahmin and when a Bhavabhūti writes like a prosaic Brahmin where is drama going to ?—they asked half in contempt and half in humiliation. Worse than that. Bhavabhūti's manner is positively insulting when he writes of love as,

advaiatm sukha-duḥkhayor anuguṇam sarvāsu avasthāsu yad  
viśāmo hrdayasya yatra jarasā yasminn ahāryo rasah  
kālena āvaraṇātyayāt pariṇate yat snehasāre sthitam  
bhadram prema sumānuṣasya katham apy ekam hi tat prāpyate.

“ Uniform in happiness and misery, equable in all conditions, the content of heart where feeling intensifies with age, and as time goes by ripens into friendship; such is love. Lucky is the man who for once is destined for such love ” (U.R. 1-39) No wonder that the populace turned down Bhavabhūti's plays and philosophy; and no wonder, too, that Bhavabhūti, in one of his most wretched moods, cursed it in such dignified accents :

ye nāma kecid iha naḥ prathayanty avajñām  
jānanti te kiṁ-āpi tān prati na eṣa yatnah  
utpatsyate mama tu ko 'pi samāna-dharma  
kālo hy ayam niravadhir vipulā ca pṛthvī

“ There are some who ( TRY TO ) treat us with contempt. Well, our plays are not meant for them. What do they know (of drama) ? There shall be born one (intellectually) our equal. There *shall* be; for, Time is endless and Earth a vast place ” ( MM. 1-8 ) Small consolation indeed for so great a writer ! In fact, the whole of Mālati-Mādhava seems to have been written in this mood. The play differs from the other two only in the fact of not being drawn from a mythological source; otherwise, the same richness of thought, the same powerful treatment, the same high thinking and accurate analysis obtain here as in the other two plays.

Mālati-Mādhava is a play that centres round a love-affair. Unlike in the earlier love-plays the hero and the heroine in the MM belong to non-princely families. Secondly, the hero and the heroine are both young and suited to each other while in earlier plays the hero, usually a king, is already a mature and married man of experience and the heroine a girl from about 16 to 18 and, of course, never married before. Throughout Act I, the dramatist is pointing out that a genuine love-story is a most natural thing ( I 16, 18, 20, 23, 27 and 35 ). He insists on this point because the love of a king and a princess in the Harṣa type of plays is, according to him, like the love between the circus manager and the animal in the cage. The princess heroine is always confined to the four walls of the palace—especially that part of the palace which is within an easy reach from the harem. Mādhava and Mālati, however, are free enough to mix with the outside world; and even in this wider world, both have found each other and have also found out that each could not live without the other. In spite of this spontaneous and mutual call, the lovers could not be brought together owing to the prevailing social conditions and conventions; nor is there any court-fool or a *Vidūṣaka* as in love-stories of kings, to arrange clandestine meeting. Bhavabhūti could never tolerate the traditional standardised fool to walk in the noble avenues of love. He has introduced a Buddhist nun—Kāmandakī by name—who, to superficial observers, appears as a go-between. When her disciple wonders why Kāmndakī who has renounced the worldly ties should interest herself in a love-intrigue the latter replies that it is only on account of her love for her friend Bhūriṣas, Mālatī's father ( I-12 ) and secondly, because the mutual love of Mādhava and Mālatī is an open secret. Under such circumstances, she adds, it is just a credit to those who would bring about the marriage ( I-16 ). Kāmandakī is a lady of great experience and learning and of a healthy outlook. "The only important and auspicious circumstance for a marriage is mutual love" ( *itaretarānurāgo hi vivāha-karmani parārdhyam* II p. 59 ). Thus she speaks to her disciple *Avalokitā*. To Mālatī herself she narrates the stories of Śakuntalā and others suggesting that even in the sacred past decent girls have been bold enough—against all difficulties—to marry only those they loved ( III 3 ). Thus training the lovers in their responsibilities,

guiding them along a straight-forward path and arranging meetings between them so that they could know and understand each other more closely; Kāmanḍaki makes bold to marry them at the time when Mālatī, as the bride-to-be of Nandana, comes in bridal procession to the temple. "To a wife her husband is a lover, a friend, all her relations, all her desires, her treasure, nay, her very life; to a husband, his wife is his rightful consort. Remember this, my dears" (VI 18) is her advice to the young lovers as they are being married in haste and secret. The story of Mādhava and Mālatī ends with Act VI. In Act VII Makaranda—Mādhava's friend—has returned to the procession disguised as Mālatī and is married to Nandana. The boy-Mālatī did not take long to give a good shaking to Nandana. Madayantikā, the sister of the bride-groom and Mālatī's friend and the beloved of Makaranda comes to pacify her friend and sister-in-law and not till she embraces the latter does she find that her sister-in-law is really her lover. Madayantikā compliments her friend by eloping with Makaranda. The story in the last three Acts is in spite of some of the best poetry in them, an unnecessary tag. In Act VIII one Kapālakundalā carries away Mālatī in order to humiliate Mādhava who had killed her preceptor Aghoraghanṭa. Act IX is only a lyrical imitation of Meghadūta; and the last Act where the elders set the seal of approval on the conduct of Mādhava and Makaranda is more conventional than artistic. It is greatly interesting to note that the commentary of Tripurari is available only upto first seven Acts though in his commentary on I 5 he seems to refer to Act VIII.<sup>2</sup>

Though Bhavabhūti seems to have written the play for an average audience there is no compromise with his artistic conceptions. He has treated love from a higher point of view. He has introduced a world of realities. Act V is a terrible scene laid in a temple in the crematorium. Act VI is the temple in the town. If in Act V Mālatī is to be sacrificed by Kapālakundalā, in Act VI she is to be sacrificed by her own people. It is a clever trick on the part of the poet to place the two temples side by

2. bhadram bhadram iti Mālatī-Madayantikā-prāpti-īupam mangala-dvayam śūcītam. Bhūvase mangalāya iti Kapālakundalā-ghṛita-mālatī-vipanna-niṣtarah. arakṣāgrhita-mādhava-makaranda-prāna-rakṣadayan śūtyante.

side and challenge his audience. Act VII represents a bed-room; Act VIII is by the side of a pond.

In basing their plays thus closely on contemporary life both Viśākhadatta and Bhavabhūti have adopted a new style and a new technique. The lengthy soliloquies of Cāṇakaya (MR. I) and Rākṣasa (MR. II), Mādhava's narration of how he fell in love at first sight (MM. III), Lavaṅgikā's description of Mālatī's state of mind (MM. III), are some of the best illustrations. The authors are more justified in this since they introduce fine dramatic dialogues. The scene of the feigned quarrel between Cāṇakya and Chandragupta (MR. III), the meeting of Rāma and Paraśurām (Mahā. II), the quarrel between Paraśurāma and the sages (Mahā. III), the fight of Mādhava and Aghoraghanṭa (MM. V), Rāma's talk with Vāsantī (U. R. III)—in such scenes the dramatists have shown great skill in weaving a dialogue in pithy and powerful prose. The plays of Śrī Harṣa present a poor contrast in this respect. As has been already shown Śrī Harṣa was more a poet of imagination and description than a dramatist of insight, observation and analysis. His plays are lyrics first and stories at the best. Viśākhadatta, on the other hand, has subordinated—even suppressed oftentimes—pure fanciful poetry to genuine dramatic value. Only once (MR. III) do we find a long, lyrical passage but then the Kaumudī festival is to be celebrated. Similarly, Bhavabhūti describes Dandaka and Pañcavatī (U. R. II and III) and it is appropriate since those sights are reviving memories painful to Rāma and helpful to the development of the play. The crematorium (MM. V) described at length for the probable reason that it could not be represented on the stage.

Far more important than either the prose style or the presentation of the contemporary life or even the high tone of accurate and economical observation and analysis is the new technique evolved by these two dramatists and to that we shall now turn.

## CHAPTER XXII

## THE NEW TOUCH

THE SUCCESS or otherwise of a drama which, as Kālidāsa has said, is prayoga-pradhāna, i.e. mainly to be represented on the stage, depends on the success or otherwise of the illusion of the audience. With the modern stage and the elaborate facilities for its setting (not, of course, in India) it is much easier for the producer and the actors to make the audience live and move in the very atmosphere of the play. Nevertheless a good dramatist, with or without such facilities, is able to create that atmosphere by his artistic ability. For one thing, a good dramatist, when and as long as he writes his play, is himself living the days and thoughts and actions of his characters. In all seriousness and with great significance Bhavabhūti's Sūtradhāra in the U. R. says :

eśośmi, bhoḥ, kavivāśāt kāryavaśāc ca  
āyodhikas tadānīntanaś ca sāmīrīttah

"Here I turn into a citizen of Ayodhyā of Rāma's days, since the poet and the plot require me to."

Mere directions or descriptions, however, are not enough to create and sustain such an illusion on the part of an audience. The power of the dramatist which does create and sustain such an illusion is the 'dramatic touch.' Sometimes it is the background, sometimes the description, and sometimes the scene or the sentiment or the characterization that creates such an illusion. The entrance and the opening speech of Cāṇakya, for example, in MR. I is a case where a scene helps to create the illusion. The Sūtradhāra in the Prologue is speaking of the eclipse of the moon. The way he expresses it there is a pun on the word *candra*—' moon ' and *grahana*—' eclipse ' or ' capturing ' (I. 6). Suddenly from behind the curtain pours the thundering voice of Cāṇakya ' who dares to lay his hands on Chandragupta as long as I am alive ? ' (āḥ ka eṣa mayi sthite chandraguptam abhibhavitum icchatī). It is the suddenness that wakes the audience into a new atmosphere and by the time Cāṇakya enters and talks in detail about his policy and actions we have so far forgotten the Sūtradhāra and formed a new and intimate acquaintance with this diplomat that we listen, with a sense of self-

importance, to the secrets of his policy. Before this illusion would be lost a spy of Cāṇakya enters as a gypsy showing round the pictorial charts of Yama and his world. In other words, the scene is such that we would never feel aloof from it and by the time Act I is over we are involved in such an interesting and intricate cob-web of plots and policies that we decide to go through the experience.<sup>1</sup> In Act II Rākṣasa is introduced; his spy enters; and poor Rākṣasa, he has forgotten all about his own spy and cannot even recognise him! With our experience of the astuteness and of the admirable coolness of Cāṇakya in Act I we cannot but pity the poor Rākṣasa. Thus as the play proceeds we are more and more taken into its atmosphere, feeling and suffering and thinking and acting with its characters so that when we rise we are refreshed as if from a healthy sort of exercise.

A most elegant example in this respect is the *Uttara-Rāma-carita* of Bhavabhūti. Herein we find both the skill of the head and the touch of the hand. The story in the U. R. is too well-known from the epic to be introduced. In the *Mahā.*, on the other hand, though based on the same popular story, the Actor asks the Manager in the Prologue what part of the story is to be dramatized since such a venture (viz., a drama version of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*) is so unusual.<sup>2</sup> (kim tu apūarvatvāt prabandhasya kathā-pradeśam samāraimbhe śrotum icchanti, p. 9.) In the U. R. from the title itself we know that Rāma's later life is to be depicted. It is Rāma-carita—the story of Rāma and Rāma alone. That the dramatist should succeed, as ultimately he did in throwing such popular characters like Sīta and Lakṣmana in the background is a marvel of his art. How is it done? Before we answer this question we shall try to understand not only the story as selected for the play but the story of how the author came to write this particular play. After all, success or otherwise depends on how far the achievement accords to the intention.

Bhavabhūti has written two plays dealing with Rāma's

1. This statement can be verified by imagining the entrance of Cāṇakya in any other way; the pun is as sudden and as suggestive.

2. Since the days of Bhāsa there were practically no plays based on the epic stories (to be distinguished from the stories in the epics). Even with Bhāsa the *Mahābhārata* was more popular than the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

story; the first he calls Mahāvira-caritam and the second Uttarārāma-caritam.

In the introduction to the Mahāviracaritam he says :—

tenedamadbhuta jagatrayamanyu-mūlam astokavīra  
gurusāhasam adbhetam ca  
vīrādbhutapriyatayā raghunandansya dharmaduho  
damyituścaritam nibaddham ( 83 )

He is writing about Rāma the joy of the Raghu family who has been brave, adventurous and heroic. It is natural for a poetic mind to be drawn to and inspired by whatever is great and unusual ( adbhuta ). And so Bhavabhūti wrote; and as he went on with his acts he did everything possible, even by departing in important episodes like Manthara's instigation and killing Vali, to make his hero great enough to defeat Paraśūrāma and re-establish the supremacy of the Kṣatriyas. To the conqueror of Paraśūrāma defeating Rāvaṇa was not such a great achievement.

The play shows all the greatness of Bhavabhūti; powerful description, brisk dialogue and mastery over style. But somehow, as in his social play Mālatī-Mādhavam, the author himself seems to be dissatisfied with his work. In this latter play the last three acts are so fantastic and unnecessarily poetic and so imitative of Kālidasa that it appears doubtful if Bhavabhūti wrote them or if, after writing, he decided to omit or change them. One of his characters frankly says, 'anyathā vastu pravṛttam anyathā vacanaparyāyah', the plot begins on one way and ends in some other way! The learned commentator Tripurāri ignores these last three acts.

A similar thing seems to have happened in the case of Mahāvīracaritam. The author took so many liberties with the original story that he must have felt at a stage that it would be better to write something on his own rather than change somebody else's story. Moreover, as he reached the Vāli episode he must have realised that heroism and cruelty could not be distinguished. Actually Paraśūrāma gives expression to that sentiment when looking at Rāma and realising that he must kill this boy he says 'dhigaho vīravṛatakrūratām' a curse on cruelty otherwise called a hero's characteristic.

So as in the case of Mālati-Mādhavam, so in that of Mahāviracaritam, Bhavabhūti was not satisfied with his own work. His one desire was to write about love; he tried it in Mālati-Mādhavam and found it ended as an imitation of Meghadūtam. Then he thought he should write about a great hero; that he found in Mahāviracaritam as nothing better than a blood curdling story. Love is the driving force in life; true but it cannot be the only force since even Mādhav and Mālatī had to conform to social formalities. A hero is a strong man; true but he need not be a cruel man. So Bhavabhūti finally invented a story where great love could be subordinated to an equally great social force and where a strong man is seen to be tender-hearted as well. It was a stroke of genius to select Rāma's story after his return from exile vajrādapi kāṭhorāṇi mṛudūni kusumādapi. Where true love could be subordinated the heart must indeed be harder than a diamond and where strength is strong enough to admit weakness, that heart must be soft and feeling. So instead of a *Lokādbhūta* Bhavabhūti selects a *Lokottara* Rāma and conveniently gives the title *Uttararāmacaritam*.

In the Mahāvīracaritam the author had said that he was writing about a hero who punished people that went against *dharma* ( dharamadruho damayituścaritam nibaddham ). But he had found that that type of punishment had not much to commend itself to the world. Every now and then God has come down to the earth in some incarnation or other and punished the wicked. That does not seem to have impressed the evildoers much since age after age the tribe has continued and sometimes thrived. Bhavabhūti had no more admiration for heroes who had to repeat their exploits. He now desired to depict and understand what he called *lokottara* man—one who was above the world and its standards and who, because of that and that only, could stand as a standard of *dharma*. This was a positive hero while the one who only punished the wicked was a negative one.

The greatness of Bhavabhūti lies in the fact of making Rāma the hero and the villain of the play; and Rāma is a great man because he is intelligently conscious of both these aspects of his character.

Throughout the first act Rāma is an ideal lover of his wife. He remembers, like a true lover, all those moments of loving life they led happily during the exile. His wife is above suspicion to him. 'Holy water and fire need no outside purifiers' ( tīrthodakam ca vanhiśca nānyataḥ śuddhimarhataḥ—I-13.) 'Do you remember how the whole night we spent talking some nonsense but in each other's arms?' he asks Sīta. When Lakṣmaṇa is showing paintings of their life in the forest Rāma at one stage, cries "Stop! I cannot bear it any more. I feel as if Sīta is again separated from me." It was unthinkable, as Sīta expresses in act III, that Rāma and Sīta could live away from one another ( esa mayā vinā ahamapyetena vinā iti kena sambhāvitamāśīt ). Even after years of married life, one touch of Sīta would make Rāma lose all self-consciousness ( I-35 ). 'Every thing about her is dear; only separation is unthinkable ( I-38 ).

This is the Rāma, the ideal lover, who is the hero of the play. And then there is another Rāma; an impetuous, hard-hearted, duty-conscious ruler of a kingdom. This Rāma, in the very first act, in reply to the message of his elders that he should look well after his subjects bursts out in hyperbolic style.

"For the good of the people I am prepared to forsake friendship, compassion, happiness, nay, even my wife Jānaki." ( I-12 ). As the elderly Janaka ( Rama's father-in-law ) says in a later act, Rāma is hasty in his declarations ( aho rāmabhadrasya kshiprakāritā ). No one commends Rāma for his sense of duty as a king when he abandons Sīta. Arundhati even refuses to go to Ayodhya under the circumstances ( vadhuvirahitām-yodhyām na gacchāmi ). When Rāma re-visits Daṇḍaka forest his former friend Vāsanti does not spare him. Oh, you hard-hearted, you loved fame more and Sīta less, she says. ( ayi kaṭhōra yaśah kila te priyam ) Could you call Rāma an ideal king because he abandoned his wife on the complaint of an ordinary citizen? Lava, who yet does not know he is Rāma's son, dismisses him in one sentence. Vṛddhāste na vicāraṇīya caritāḥ—he is an elderly person, so the less said about him the better. Even Earth ( Sīta's mother ) says that Rāma not only did a dis-service to himself but to others including the Fire

Deity (VII-5); in other words, he is accused of presuming more wisdom in himself.

So, from the point of view of every other character (except his wife Sītā), Rāma is a villain too.

The greatness of the play, the sublimity of the dramatic quality, however, consists in the fact that Rāma himself knows that he has the qualities of a villain as well.

At the end of Act I when he decides to abandon Sītā he calls himself all kinds of names, he finally falls in shame and humility on Sītā's feet. He says that Rāma lives only to suffer misery (I-47). When in act II he has to cut off the head of Śambūka he hesitates but then he addresses his uplifted hand. "Why do you hesitate? How can you feel pity? Do not forget that you are the right hand of that Rāma who sent into exile his wife advanced in pregnancy" (II-10). When he is going over Daṇḍakāranya in Vāsanti's company there comes a moment when he could no longer contain himself. "Here I am crying helplessly, do not be angry with me" he says to the forest and its favourite spots (III-32). Rāma is no longer a hero, no more a great man. "Poor boy! he must rule his kingdom vigilantly; he must grieve for his wife as well. He abandoned her on his own; he must cry on his own; and even that is not easy" (III-30) says Tamasā. When in act VI Rāma, while talking to Kuśa and Lava, is moved to tears Lava asks his elder brother why the great man cries and Kuśa says:

"Without Sītā all is misery to Rāma; in the absence of his wife the world is a wilderness to him; their love was so great and this separation is final; you have studied Rāmāyaṇa, you ought to know." (VI-30).

You do not pity a hero. And here Tamasā and Kuśa do no more and no less.

## II

Rāma is undoubtedly the central character of the play. Even the coincidence that he begins the play (immediately after the exit of Sūtradhāra) by consoling Sītā and assuring her that the elders would not abandon them (devi vaidehi viśvāsihi te hi guravo na śaknuvanti vihātumasmān) and that he ends the play by saying that he got all he desired (atah

paramapi priyamasti) would strike a careful reader. Of the seven acts of the play, Rāma appears in five. In the remaining two he is always there and, strangely enough, in the two aspects described above. In act IV he is almost a villain, so much so that Janaka, Rajarsi—declaims against Rāma, his own son-in-law and says that Rāma's wickedness has so angered him that he must pacify himself either by fighting him or cursing him.

etadvaiśasa vajraghorapatanam ūśvanmamotpaśyataḥ  
krodhasya jvalitum zatityavasarāścāpen ūśapena vā (84)

In act V Chandraketu and Lava talk about Rāma as a hero and a Rājarṣi.

Throughout the play the character of Rāma is revealed to us not in his own words and deeds but through the opinion of every other character in the play. In the entire Vedic Hindu tradition perhaps Bhavabhūti is the only writer who had the courage and the greatness of an artist to depict Rāma as an ordinary human being. And like all other human beings, Rāma has both good and bad, strong and weak points. Every other character in the play gives his or her own judgement of Rāma.

The only exception is Sītā. This fact makes her shine in contrast. As the play proceeds Rāma sinks in our estimation gradually till we have nothing but pity towards him while Sītā grows higher and higher in our estimation till we agree with Arundhati who, speaking of Sītā in act IV, "you may be a child or a disciple to me; but I feel attached to you because of the great purity of your character; you may be just a woman or a child but you deserve to be worshipped by all the worlds; it is not age or sex that commands respect but the virtues."

śiśurvā śiśyā vā yadasi mama tattīṣṭhatu tathā  
viśuddherutkarṣṭavayi tu mama bhaktim dṛḍhayati  
śiśutvam straiṇam vā bhavatu nanu vandyāśi jagatām  
guṇāḥ pūjāsthānam guṇiṣu na ca lingam na ca vayah (IV-11)

In the very prologue the Sutradhāra tells us that people are usually unreasonable in praising a person or in blaming him and they are usually wicked when they talk about women or scandal. So it is no surprise if they started a scandal against Sītā. A good husband, however, is not swayed by public rumours. Rāma, like a good husband, ridicules the fire-ordeal through

which Sītā established her purity after her compulsory residence at Ravaṇa's place. "Sītā is born pure, no other purifier is necessary" ( *utpattiparipūtāyāḥ kīmasyāḥ pāvanāntaraiah* I-13) he says in act I. Throughout the act he describes her as pure, simple, loving, loveable and so on. Even when, later in the act, he decides to abandon her he says "I am an untouchable, let me not contaminate her" ( she is sleeping in his arms ). ( *tatkīmāspṛśyah pātakī devīm dūṣayāmi* ) and finally places his head on her feet! Could we imagine any Hindu husband doing such obeisance to his wife? But Bhavabhūti, at a time when Rāma was worshipped as an incarnation of God, makes him roll his head in the dust of Sītā's feet! In the last act, when the episode is being enacted in Rāma's presence, the two Goddesses Earth and Ganga ( in the play—within—the play ) say to Sītā " You yourself are an auspicious blessing ( mangalam ) to the world; and your purity is increased by your relationship to us ". Laksmana draws Rāma's attention to this remark and Rāma says " let the people listen to that ", because he himself had never doubted the purity of his wife. In act II Rāma comes to the Dandaka forest where everything reminds him of Sītā and the happy time he spent with her during the exile. " Sītā was very fond of forests and gardens—*Priyārāmā hi vaidehī āśīt*. That remark of Rāma shows us a Sītā who had a loving nature and who had good tastes. And what is more, in spite of all her good qualities, Sītā is quite human. What strikes us regarding Sītā's characterisation in the play is the fact that she has the ideal virtues of a Hindu wife and commands our respect and admiration. She is never such an ideal character as to make us respect and admire her from a distance. On the other hand, we feel she is very near to us. In act III where Sītā is invisible to Rāma but where he feels her presence on one context he bursts out with the words " *hā priye Jānaki* ", " Oh, my beloved Janaki ". To that remark Sītā's simple rejoinder is ' *āryaputra asadṛsam khalvetadasya vṛttāntasya* ' " What has happened is unlike what you say " ( i. e. you have abandoned me and now calling me ' beloved ' ). In a later context in the same act when Vāsanti and Rāma are talking about the young one of an elephant which was adopted as a son years ago by Sītā and which has now grown up and moving in company of a female one, Sītā says to her friend Tamasā

Bhagavati tamase, etena apatyasamsmaranena uschvasitapra-  
snutastanī idānīm vatsayoh pituh sannidhānena kṣaṇa-  
mātram samsārinī samvittāsmi.

“Remembering the children, with my motherly milk oozing and with my husband and children near about, even for a moment, I feel like a samsārinī i. e. a house-wife.”

Any wife and mother would say that and feel that and, by saying it, Sītā stands before us like an ordinary human being. But, at the same time, no wife in Sītā’s circumstances is likely to have that nobility and sincerity that Sītā shows by her remark. Her husband is there, true; but he has abandoned her, and even now cannot see her physically; her children she has left in somebody else’s care; her whole life has been ruined by this man. But the wife and mother in her are so strong that they make her forget her unhappiness of a life-time but only feel and enjoy the happiness of a moment (kṣanamātram). Later when Vāsanti says to Rāma “Oh, you are a cruel man” Sītā feels moved to say, “Oh, my friend, why do you speak like that? My husband deserves to be respected by everyone, particularly by one who is my dear friend.” When Rāma, after rebuking and torturing himself, bursts out in bitter weeping, Sītā feels sorry that on her account Rāma should again suffer like that. She is not spitefully happy that Rāma lives to repent, nor is her womanly vanity satisfied that Rāma still loves her; she is incapable of selfishness of any kind, direct or indirect. At the same time when Rāma, feeling her presence, appeals to her to come to him and says, ‘na māmevamvidham parityaktumarhasi’—“please do not abandon me”, quickly Sītā says ‘ayi āryaputra vipratīpamiva’ “my dear husband, don’t you think what you say is contrary?” (because he has abandoned her). We smile without realizing that tears would be rolling down our cheeks at the same time. Throughout the third act Sītā’s character towers over that of Rāma. Is she not as miserable? Does she not feel as bitter? Actually, being a woman her position is more insufferable and pitiable than that of Rāma. And yet the more and more Rāma weeps aloud bitterly the calmer is the attitude of Sītā. She is in it and at the same time above it. Rāma takes a decision and suffers for it; Sītā suffers for another’s decision but does not judge Rāma. When Rāma tells Vāsanti that for the purpose of officiating at a sacrifice he has a golden

image of Sītā by his side and even that much pleasure is his "I am lucky indeed", says Sītā, "that my husband has such a high regard for me." When at the end of the third act Rāma is leaving Panchavaṭi Sītā bids farewell to him in these words :

namah suktapunyajanadaṁshaniyābhyaṁ aryaputra caranā-  
kamalābhyaṁ' (87)

I bow to the feet of my husband, those feet which could be seen only by people that have done some virtuous or meritorious deeds.

Could self-effacement reach nobler heights than this ?

### III

It is interesting to note that of all the Sanskrit dramatists Bhavabhūti is the only one to use the word 'carita' in the title of his play. Of his two plays dealing with the story of Rāma-yāṇa the first one is *Mahāvīra-caritam* and the other one is *Uttararāma-caritam*. This word is used by Kālidāsa in his play *Mālavikāgnimitram* when he describes nāṭya or a stage-show.

'Traiguṇyodbhavamatra lokacaritam nānārasam drsyate' (88)

'Herein is found the *carita* of the world which is born of the three qualities and which is of various rasas (flavour or variety)'. The word *carita* here seems to mean 'doings, actions, behaviour' etc. Bhavabhūti, when he took that word for his title, must have had a particular reason. In other words, in the *Mahāvīracaritam* and in *Uttararāmacaritam*, the main object of the dramatist seems to be to write about the doings or behaviour of a 'great hero' and of Rāma respectively.

Studied from this point of view the play *Uttararāmacaritam* fully justifies the traditional claim of Bhavabhūti to unequalled greatness as a dramatist (Uttare rāmacarite bhavabhūtirviśiṣyate). The seven acts of the play are like the colours of a rainbow; just as these variegated colours are ultimately one white ray so also these seven acts, between themselves, compose Rāma's *carita* (i. e. behaviour and actions). The total picture is as attractive as a rainbow.

The story of the plot can be narrated very briefly. After his conquest of Rāvaṇa, Rāma returns to Ayodhya with Sītā whom he rescues from Rāvaṇa. His coronation takes place.

One day a spy brings word that among the subjects there is some suspicion regarding Sītā's chastity ( during the time she was carried away by Rāvaṇa ). She had gone through the fire-ordeal at Lankā itself to prove her chastity; but Lankā is too far away from Ayodhyā. So Rāma decides to abandon Sītā ( act I ).

Years roll by. Now Rāma performs the Horse-Sacrifice. The sacrificial horse in its wanderings enters Vālmīki's hermitage and is challenged by Lava and Kuśa; finally Rāma himself has to come to accept the challenge. But, as it turns out, he learns from Vālmīki that Lava and Kuśa are his own sons and Sītā has been staying in the hermitage. The family is re-united ( acts IV, V, VI & VII ).

In between Bhavabhūti has written two acts in which he has brought Rāma back to the Dāṇḍaka forest. One Śūdra was practising penance which was a violation of Dharma, so Rāma had to go to Dāṇḍaka to punish that man ( act II ); after that, he took time off to see his earlier acquaintances in Pañcavaṭi ( act III ).

This is the story which Bhavabhūti presents as a beautifully constructed, an almost perfect piece of artistic creation. He relates the story entirely as *rāma-carita* i. e. as the behaviour and actions of Rāma. Every act tells us of one particular aspect of that carita. Stage by stage this work of art takes shape before our eyes. Even as we admire the skill of masonry, we do not realise the thrill that awaits us when the work is completed. Bhavabhūti can hardly be accused of modesty where an estimate of himself is concerned. He refers to himself in the beginning as one " whom vāk i. e. the power of expression obeys like a slave " ( Yam brahmāṇamīyam devī vāgvāyevānuvartate ) and in the last verse of the play he says,

tāmenām paribhāvayamtvabhinayaivinyastarūpām budhāḥ  
śabda-brahma-vidah kaveh pariṇatām prājnasya vāṇīmimām  
(89)

" Let the literary experts know that, the word-power of the present well-versed poet has given this well-constructed play. "

A closer analysis of the play would show that this is no vain boast.

As the play begins we find the Sūtradhāra getting ready to take a suitable rôle. " Here, now I have turned myself into a

citizen of Ayodhyā of Rāma's days". As he says it, he looks about and is suddenly dismayed. What is this, he asks himself; this is the coronation time of Rāma and the whole capital must be bustling with noise and pleasure-seeking crowds; instead of which, he is astounded to see, even the palace-people are not to be seen moving about.

That is the atmosphere in which Bhavabhūti begins his play. Where joy is expected, it is all sullen and silent. As the main scene begins even Sītā feels a tension in the atmosphere. That, says Rāma, is only because all the elders have left for a sacrifice to be performed by Rāma's brother-in-law. As in the case of act I of Kālidāsa's Śākuntalam, here also the elders are absent. If Kanva were present, would the marriage of Śākuntalā and Duṣyanta have remained a secret only between the lovers? And because Kanva was absent, later when Duṣyanta forgot his marriage with Śākuntalā it was his word against that of a girl, a born schemer (*aśikṣitapaṭu*) as Duṣyanta calls all women. Similarly, if the elders were present would Rāma have taken such a hasty decision to abandon Sītā? But they are absent. And Rāma, almost upto the end of act I, seems the most unlikely husband to abandon his wife. Nobody can doubt your purity because you are born pure, he says; not only that, since the time of marriage Rāma has place in his heart and on his arms only for Sītā; She is everything to him; separation from her is unthinkable. In all this Rāma shows himself as the ideal lover. That is why when the moment comes to abandon her at the end of act I he has no courage for it and stealthily creeps away while she is asleep.

Throughout the act II Rāma blames himself for what he had done. As a lover he has his duties towards Sītā; as a king he has his duties towards his subjects. At a moment when the latter won he abandoned her; after abandoning her, he wondered if life was worth living.

In act III the poet has made Rāma realise what he has missed in his life. The introduction of a young elephant which was treated as a son by Rāma and Sītā when they were in the forest during the exile is one of the most touching and subtle device. Rāma finds that he has entirely missed parental responsibilities and that makes him feel annoyed with Sītā. " You have

been cruel. Why did you leave me?" He raves not realising that what he says is against facts.

In act IV the elders referred to in act I appear on the scene. And not one of them upholds Rāma for his sense of duty as a king. On the other hand, his father-in-law Janaka, who in mythological tradition is the ideal Karmayogi, actually raises his hand to curse Rāma.

In act V, as mentioned earlier, Rāma's fame and valour are ridiculed by Lava while in act VI Kuśa stands in judgment on Rāma's actions.

It is in the last act that Rāma gives a judgment on himself. When Arundhatī explains the situation Rāma says :

kṛtāparādhosmi bhagavatī tvayā anukampayitavyo  
rāmah praṇamati

" Revered Lady, I am guilty ; take pity on me, I bow to you." Bhavabhūti has made Rāma suffer for his love as Duṣyanta did in Kalidasa's play. But in the case of Duṣyanta it was the unseen force of Durvāsas' curse that made him abandon Śakuntalā while Rāma did what he did with open eyes. It is true when there was a conflict between his duty as a lover and his duty as a king, Rāma decided to remain a king. But Bhavabhūti has shown that true love is stronger than anything else in man's life. There is one great difference. If Rāma had suffered as a king, his suffering would have made him weaker and more selfish. But love's suffering makes a man nobler and stronger.

And it was this *carita* of Rāma which Bhavabhūti has effectively dramatised.

As the play opens, the Sūtradhāra tells us that it is the festival of Rāma's coronation ; and yet he wonders why the officers and the royal servants are, one and all, so quiet ! How is it that the city, instead of being gay at the festivity, is all glum and gloomy ? The public squares absolutely deserted ! We too soon begin to wonder what is wrong. Perhaps, as we know the story, we fear that Sītā has been already abandoned. Our fears are set at rest by the Actor's information that all the visitors have left Ayodhyā. Rāma's mothers too have left under Vasiṣṭha's escort, for Rṣyasringa's hermitage where sacrificial

sessions lasting for 12 years, are to be started. What a pity that Rāma, after his happy return, should not be able to enjoy the company of his people—for possibly another 12 years. The greater the pity since Sītā is with child. It is only now that Rāma, proud and flushed, would need the help and advice and that Sītā the sympathy and care of the elders. No wonder then that there are no festivities in the town. The new king might be feeling suddenly deserted and dejected. So the manager (Sūtradhāra) decides to go to the palace perhaps with an idea of entertaining the king (sva-jāti-samayēna, 'as suits the etiquette of our profession'). The Actor says that they will have to be very careful in their use of words (since Rāma is so dejected) "You cannot be too careful either of words or of women", says the Manager, "people *will* misunderstand or misinterpret them." "That reminds me," whispers the Actor. "do you know our people are talking scandal even against Sītā on account of her stay in Laṅkā ? They don't believe the fire-ordeal!" We are one with Sūtradhāra who says "God help us that this scandal doesn't find its way to Rāma!" What a tragedy it would be at this time when his only companion is Sītā, when he is proud she is going to bear him issue! With this knowledge and suggestion we are prepared, as the main scene opens, to sympathise with Rāma, universally deserted so to say; and we pity Sītā for her innocence.

As the main scene proceeds we feel as if we are in a maze of gloom. Irony mocks us at every step and as we look back we find no one there and so we feel lonelier still. Against the background of Sūtradhāra's suggestion, the attempts of Rāma and Sītā to cheer each other convey a sinister impression to our mind. "Separation from relatives is always distressing," says Sītā and Rāma just to cheer her, agrees cheerfully to what she says. "Separation from relatives—!" We shudder. What would Sītā feel when, as we know, she is to be separated from her husband? However, like a ray of sun-shine in a dark room comes the sage Aṣṭāvakra from Rṣyaśringa's hermitage. With childish petulance Sītā wants to know if people still remember her there. Not only they remembered her but Vasiṣṭha had sent a message specially for her. "The Universal Mother is your mother; Janaka, as great as god Prajāpati, is your father; you are the daughter-in-law of that family (royal) of which Sun and myself are the preceptors.

What else shall we desire for you? Be a mother of heroes.' (1-9). What a consolation for a married woman! Should she only look up to her parents, her father-in-law or her sons? Why did not Vaśiṣṭha tell her that she was the only and beloved queen of one of the greatest kings?<sup>3</sup> It is an ominous omission and an omission that is cruelly suggestive to an audience knowing the story. Just as we are sadly thinking over it, Rāma, in reply to Vaśiṣṭha's message that the interests of the subjects are the only interests of a king, bursts out heroically that to please his subjects he would even abandon his beloved Sītā (1-12). Our fear grows a bit worse—and we are relieved at the entrance of Laksmana with the paintings of some of the episodes during their exile. "How far has the painter covered our exile?" asks Rāma. "As far as the incident of Sītā's purification through the fire-ordeal" is Laksmana's reply. Heavens forbid, we cry with Rāma, is there any purification for Sītā who is pure from her very birth? (I-13). And yet the play ironically suggests some such scandal from the very beginning. It could not be helped. This stigma (of having stayed in Rāvana's city) will stick to Sītā throughout her life (eṣa te jīvitāvadhiḥ pravādah). The joyful interlude disappears as quickly as a tropical twilight. As the three go on viewing the paintings an atmosphere of 'old-age-ish' mournful remembrances returns. The more they look at the views the more they feel the joys of days *gone by*, the sadder they feel for their present state till Rāma could contain no longer. "I feel as if I am living in those days in which I held in marriage your hand that was joy incarnate so to say" he says to Sītā (I-18). "Gone are the days when our father was living, when I was newly wed and when our mothers used to look after us." (I-19). Why, even the days of exile were happy! "Do you remember, my dear, the time Laksmana used to look after us? Do you remember how we used to enjoy ourselves on the beautiful banks of Godāvarī? Do you remember how cheek-to-cheek and arm-in-arm we used to talk away the

3. Cf. Raṇhu. XIV-74 where Kālidāsa makes Vālmīki welcome the abandoned Sītā in these words: "Your famous father-in-law is my friend; your father who is the best guide and philosopher of the good (is also my friend); you yourself are at the fore-front of faithful wives. Why should I not be then compassionate to you?" No word again of Rāma!

whole night? Do you remember—" (I-27). Poor Rāma! the heart that yearns for the past has surely its reasons to rue the present. The more they think of the past, the wider is the gulf between the happy past and the miserable present. They feel like children lost in the wilderness whiling away their fears by thinking of mother's arms; like lonely wanderers lost in a stormy night. Sītā shudders. "The gloom has so covered me up that I feel as if I am again separated from my husband" (aham api atibhūmīm gatena rājanaranakena ārya-putra-sūnyam iva ātmānam paśyāmi. p. 33). It *does* get unbearable. The misery is not only revived but intensified so much so that Rāma cries out "Stop. Laksmaṇa, I feel as if I am once again separated from my Sītā" (I-33). Feels as if! Once again we see the approaching shadow of the calamity. The tragedy consists in the fact that while we feel and see and know it Rāma is ignorant and unbelieving. Husband and wife are once again left to themselves. They breathe freely and close to one another. Sītā is exhausted. "Ever rely on me, I shall make you happy. What? Looking for a pillow? Poor dear, here's Rāma's arm. That's your pillow and that's your privilege, yours and yours alone." (I-37). There Sītā falls asleep in a minute. On Rama's arm! How ironically symbolic! The arm that won for love, the arm that promised her protection and the same arm, as we know in the story, that is going to cast her away! Rāma himself recognises this irony later on in Act II where he is to kill a Śūdra for being a Śūdra and practising penance at the same time. "You are the hand of that Rāma" he coaxes his trembling hand "of that Rāma who was cruel enough to send into exile his Sītā who was in a delicate condition." (II-10) For the present, he is ignorant of what is coming. He is lovingly looking at the soft, innocent, beautiful eyes of Sītā sleeping on his arm. At last! he says, I am happy. Such love as ours comes once in a while and lucky is the man to whom it does (I-39). That Rāma should say this while the spy with the terrible news of the scandal on his lips is actually standing at the door is indeed the limit of the cold, calculating cruelty of the Fates. Lest the dull-witted miss this cruelty the author has used a device (technically known as *patākā-sthāna*) where the last word used by Rāma viz., *virahah*, 'separation,' is syntactically connected with the first word viz., *upasthitah* ('arrival') anno-

uncing the spy. ('Separation has arrived' is the complete sentence-idea,) The effect is as cruel as waking a man from sleep and then stabbing him. The shadow that was looming so large is now too near and Rāma, feeling uncomfortable from the very beginning, bursts out. The poet is too artistic to leave at that. As Sītā gets on the chariot which she thinks is taking her for a pleasure-trip (and which we know is going to cast her away) she asks the charioteer to be careful since something stirs within her (sphurati me garbha-bhārah, my womb throbs). Finally, not realising the unkindness that is visited on her, she salutes in all innocence the deities of Rāma's family (namo raghu-kula-devatābhyaḥ). Lucky for these deities that the curtain drops immediately.

We have dealt with the 'touch' in the first Act since it sets the problem before us as the dramatist wants us to see it. There are other situations introduced, as for example, Rāma's coming to Pañcavaṭī (II), Sītā's arrival there under Tamasā's protection and the divine arrangement of Sītā not being perceived by anyone else (III), the meeting of Rāma with Lava and Kuśa who, he has a psychological presentiment, are probably his sons (VI): in such situations which the dramatist brings in as illustrations there is a presentation, an interpretation or an 'atmosphere'. By such scenes which are as if intimately known to us we are taken to the world of the characters themselves. Thus in Act III is the episode of an elephant that twelve years ago was Sītā's pet. He is known as the adopted son of Sītā. "Oh, how my child has grown!" says Sītā. Rāma (who, of course, is unaware of Sītā, though she can hear and see him) talks, as if, to Sītā, "You are lucky, my dear, since your child is now grown to a marriageable age." Sītā is now a mother—suffering motherhood incarnate—when she says, "let my son be not separated from his beloved." Every father and every mother at every home at any time has the same sentiments; so the audience is at once intimate with the characters and the situation. Sītā laughs through her tears as she confesses to her friend Tamasā "look, my motherly milk is flowing." There's my child and there's his father and being so near them I feel, for a moment, as if I am a lady of the house" (samsārini iva saṁvṛttā). It is in this new atmosphere of mature love and its responsibilities that we are asked to see and judge Rāma and Sītā. Rāma may be a very foolish

husband, but surely he is a good father. And what man is not great who has a feeling heart? "There is only one sentiment, the sentiment of feeling. It assumes different forms of expression according to the difference in circumstances; just as water, called an eddy or a bubble or a wave, is water in essence." In this last verse of Act III Bhavabhūti has given us a beautiful definition of tragedy. Aristotle's idea of catharsis, of evoking emotions in the audience, is seen here with a better insight. Feelings must be noble if they are to be interpreted by a great artist; the artist must be great if he is to analyse and interpret the world of feelings. Bhavabhūti has done it in a masterly way and let us say with Tamasā (at the end of Act III).

aho samavidhānakam, 'What a grand piece of Art! Drama is the mirror of the ways of Man.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### EPICS AND SANSKRIT DRAMA

In the final stages of the development of the Sanskrit drama the most noteworthy feature is the influence of the two epics—more especially as source of the story-plots of the later dramas. With plays like those of Bhavabhūti, we definitely see the best and the last. Though it could be expected that many a drama was written after the age of Bhavabhūti, it could be said with as much certainty that plays in Sanskrit not only ceased to be the fashion but also ceased to be standard plays. In a later place, we shall see the causes that led finally to the decay of the Sanskrit drama. Here it is enough to note that in the post-Bhavabhūti period Sanskrit plays continued just enough to exhibit the symptoms of decadence and deterioration. However, as suggested above, the one thing to strike even a casual observer was the influence of the epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. Murāri, a dramatist in the middle of the 9th century, rightly observes :—

aho sakala-kavi sārtha-sādhāraṇī khalu iyam Vālmīkiyā  
subhāṣitānīvi.

“ How this good composition of Vālmīki has become the joint-stock capital for all writer-merchants ? ”

Even from the earliest days, as a matter of fact, we could see that the epics were an inspiration to Sanskrit dramatists. In the plays ascribed to Bhāsa, we have one-act plays based on the episodes from Mahābhārata while Bālacharita, Abhiṣaka, and Pratimā are based on the Rāma-story. Later we find Bhavabhūti writing two plays, Mahāvīracarita and Uttararāmacarita, based on the same story. What is further striking is the fact that both the dramatists, within the compass of their respective plays, narrate the complete story of the Rāmāyaṇa—including the first and later (interpolated) sections of the epic. Secondly, as already suggested, Bhāsa and Bhavabhūti have shown their greatness by daring to introduce changes in and interpretations of the story as handed down by the epic tradition. As a matter of fact, between Bhāsa and Bhavabhūti, on the one hand, and later writers of Rāma plays on the other, the difference that we find is exactly the story of the deterioration of the dramatic art in Sanskrit

literature. Bhāsa and Bhavabhūti, have dramatised the episodes from Rāmāyaṇa while later dramatists—we shall have to call them so, at least by courtesy—have simply narrated, rewritten the Rāma-story in the *campū* style and within Purāṇic atmosphere.

As examples of this later style, let us look at the three plays (1) *Kundamālā* by Diināga, (2) *Anargha-Rāghava* by Murāti and *Prasanna-Rāghava* by Jayadeva. The first, K. M., belongs to a period, as could be seen from a closer comparison, immediately after Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti; the A. R., as already mentioned, belongs to the ninth century A. D.; and the third, the Pras. R., is as late as the third, quarter of the fifteenth century A. D. Of these three, the K. M. deals with the latter part of Rāma's story, beginning where Act I of Bhavabhūti's U. R. ends, with Lakṣmaṇa leading Sītā to the forest before abandoning her. In Act I, the abandoned queen of Rāma, is reported to Vālmīki by his pupils and Vālmīki, making use of his *yogacakṣus* now finds Sītā innocent and therefore decides to take her to his āshram. In the *praveśaka* of the next Act (which takes us to a period of eight to ten years after Act I) the birth of Sītā's twins (who are now studying Rāmāyaṇa—abālau *samvṛittau*—they have ceased to be children) is reported and it is also mentioned that Rāma, initiating the performance of a sacrifice at Naimiṣa, has sent a messenger to invite Vālmīki. It is very strange that important episodes are thus casually disposed off while the main scene is taken up by a dialogue between Sītā and Vedavatī wherein all that Sītā says is that she loves Rāma and knows that Rāma loves her. In Act III Sītā, her two sons (though they themselves do not know that she is their mother) and also Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa have all assembled in the Naimiṣa forest. The main scene is the title scene wherein as Rāma is wandering with his brother; the *kundamālā*, wreath of Kunda flowers woven by Sītā, is carried by the breeze and drops as Rāma's feet who immediately recognises the design of Sītā's hands. The two brothers, now like two detectives, follow up the clues till they see female foot-prints on which they conclude that Sītā must be there. What is still more ridiculous, Rāma is keen to find out, where Sītā, a wife abandoned years ago, stays. In Act IV, the interlude tells us of an intended recitation-show

of Rāmāyaṇa in which Tilottamā is to play the rôle of Sītā. We are also informed that Valmīki has a pond in and around which women-folk could not be seen by men. So in the main scene Rāma is somehow dragged by the dramatist to his pond where Sītā also comes. Sītā could see her husband, though owing to Vālmīki's yogic stage-setting so to say Rāma could not see Sītā. Only in one respect the dramatist has shown his imaginative skill. Though the actual Sītā could not be seen, her image in the waters could be seen by Rāma. However, when later on, the Vidūṣaka tells Rāma that Tilottamā is to play Sītā's role, poor Rāma thinks to his chagrin that the image he saw must have been that of Tilottamā in Sītā's role. The last two Acts just describe the recitation of Rāmāyaṇa by Lava and Kuśa, who, at the end, are revealed to Rāma as his own sons. At the end Sītā has to go through the ordeal to prove her innocence. That done, Rāma accepts his wife, Kuśa is crowned as King and Lava as the heir-apparent.

As we read the play we are not struck so much by any greatness of the dramatist as we are reminded of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. The more we read the play the more we feel that some youngish admirer of Bhavabhūti has tried to make a play by putting together different pieces from the works of those two dramatists. The main scene in the very first act opens like that in A.Śak. with a similar description of the moving chariot. Sītā's speech in Act I reminds us of Kālidāsa's verse in Raghuvaṇsa in the same context. (Raghu. XIV-65) Throughout the play Diinnāga's verses betray a very strong influence of the poetry of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. What is more interesting is the presence of a Vidūṣaka friend of Rāma. This Vidūṣaka is attempted to be created in the very image of the Vidūṣaka in the A.Śak. Like Kālidāsa's Duṣyanta Diinnāga's Rāma asks his Vidūṣaka in Act V.

'Rāma : If you think Sītā worthy enough to be still remembered why did you not prevent me when I decided to abandon her ?'

Throughout the play the shadow of Bhavabhūti's masterpiece, the U. R., is clearly discernible. Phrases, sentences, lines of verses, stage devices—there is no aspect of the dramatic art where the stern southern Brahmin has not held Diinnāga bound

in awe and admiration. And even the Diññāga does not claim our admiration. Vāślmki who is a poet and an artist to Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti is just a tradition-bound orthodox indeed elderly priest in Kundamālā. Sīta who has her own individuality in Raghuvamśa and Uttararamācarita is, to Diññaga, no more than a conventional housewife. Drama, instead of an art of the stage is a dialogue book of the classroom. The story, of Rāmāyaṇa appeals to Diññāga not for its dramatic qualities but for its moral lesson.

Anargha-Rāghava of Murāri, on the other hand, is a more ambitious play. Within seven acts it covers the entire story of Rāmāyaṇa. As in K. M., here also there is more poetry to describe the conventional time, day, season, and other objects than is relevant in a drama. The drama is almost a poetic composition with 567 verses. In the Viśkambhaka of Act II, for example, six verses describe dawn, four more describe the morning and then in the main scene Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa recite 14 verses to describe Viśvāmitra's hermitage. In the last act where victorious Rāma is returning to Ayodhyā seated in the *puṣpaka* plane, Rāma, pointing to the earth below as the plane flies, describes the various countries, rivers, mountains etc.; he even talks of the *Vaidarbhi* style in poetry. And then his 'asides' to Sītā, where he mostly talks about *viparīta-rati*, *puruṣāyita* etc., are sheer abominations. The play is one of the best examples of the degradation to which Sanskrit language and the art of drama had sunk. When at the end (VII-146) he talks of his drama as a poem (*kavītā*) and says that it would please people we feel like pitifully patting Murāri on his back and ask him to read more and write less.

The third play, Prasanna-Rāghava of Jayadeva, is no better. He himself offers a kind of an apology by making, in the opening scene, the Actor ask the Manager as to why all poets write only about Rāmachandra. It is true. By the fifteenth century when Jayadeva lived every writer was writing only about the story of Rāmāyaṇa. So Jayadeva also narrates the same story in seven acts. As a matter of fact, by this time, not only the incidents but even the course of the various acts seem to have been fixed. The breaking of the bow, the defeat of Paraśurāma, the slaughter of Vāli, the achievements of the

monkey-chiefs, the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, ( always off the stage and described by two Vidyādharaś ) all these mechanically, monotonously unroll before us, brightened up here and there by the feverish poetic effusions of the dramatists. The pity of it is, the better the poetry the more out of place it would appear. Jayadeva has, in addition, tried puns ( one of them is proverbially famous even to-day<sup>1</sup> ), scenes like Rāvaṇa suddenly becoming a Rākṣasa with ten faces ( I ), of the fire in Sītā's hand suddenly changing into a signet ring ( VI ); and in the last act five characters, who have actually nothing else to do, describe the evening, in turns, in nineteen verses. But the play is not yet over, as Rāma's aeroplane is still on its way to the capital. The evening passes, night wears off and then the morning sun is described before the audience is permitted to disperse.

In most of these later Rāma plays one motive, common to all these dramatists, is obvious. We have seen how each dramatist makes a reference to the popularity of Rāma stories with writers on the whole. The reason for this popularity we do find as we read carefully through the plays. In the K. M. in the very first act Rāma is referred to as Madhusūdan ( in spite of the clear anachronism ). In III-14 the dramatist speaks of *Rāmābhidhāno Hariḥ, Hari* ( God ) called Rāma. In Pras. R. we have a line which reads *balitmanā parinataḥ puruṣāḥ purāṇāḥ* the primeval puruṣa in the form of a boy ( IV-45 ) in which words Paraśurāma describes Rāma, his conqueror. The poor dramatic quality seems to have been fully compensated for by the fact that the play described the glories of God. In other words, drama as drama did not interest the writer, nor, apparently, did it interest the audience. These dramatic compositions were more of sacred literature than an art, which, according to Kālidāsa, pleased people of different tastes or which, as Bhāsa mentions in his Prat., was staged in palaces as mere entertainment. As if knowing this, the dramatist very scrupulously but superficially followed the rules laid down in books on dramaturgy. Thus Diṇnāga, in his K. M., makes every act end with a verse which gives a conventional description of the time of the day. Similarly, we find in these plays devices like *pravesaka* and *viṣkambhaka*

1. *nakṣatrakuśalo bhavān* ( also *na ksatrakuśalo bhavān* )

though as in the A. R., III a *viṣkambhaka* describes and deals with more and important episodes than the main scene. Similarly in the Pras. R., the whole of Act IV is more of the nature of an interlude than an act in the play. When drama is a recitation, it is but natural to have a dozen verses at a stretch (and in long metres) describing anything that the dramatist fancied for the moment. That incidents could be so united as to produce a dramatic atmosphere never struck these writers who were narrating incidents that were too well-known. From the fifth Veda, common to all castes, as Bharata had visualised it, drama deteriorated into what were later known as *bhajan melās*.

It is interesting to note that after Bhāsa hardly any dramatist has selected either the story of or episodes from the other epic viz. the Mahābhārata. Partly this might be due to the fact that the poetic and compact story of Rāma was more popular; but when we find that the story of Mahābhārata has more dramatic elements and potentialities in it than that of Rāma it is necessary to find some stronger motive to justify Murāri's comment quoted above. That motive seems to lie in the fact that drama, as a literary composition, turned more and more to preaching a good moral life. The rugged life and morals as depicted in the Mahābhārata were not a safe peg to hang the moral clothes on. The popularity of the Rāma story on the other hand encouraged writers even to attempt just a scene or two. Thus we have a play called Dūtāṅgada by one Subhaṭa (1088 A. D.-1172 A. D. when Kumārapāla was ruling in Gujarat) which consists of four scenes only. The author confesses that he has selected from others' works and made up his own play 'in prose and verse (gadya-padya-bandham)', though there is practically no prose. In this play Aṅgada comes to Rāvaṇa with a message from Rāma; Rāvaṇa's wife and brother advise him to return Sītā to Rāma; Rāvaṇa refuses, monkeys attack Lankā and Rāvaṇa dies.

Plays like Dūtāṅgada suggest that by the 12th century even Rāma-plays were losing their popularity. It is not surprising, therefore, to come across, for a change, plays based on the Mahābhārata stories. Two such plays, for instance, are the Bālabhārata of Rājaśekhara and the Subhadrā-Dhanañjaya of Kulaśekharavarma-bhūpāla.

The first of these, called also *pracanda-pāṇḍava* as the prologue tells us, does not seem complete. We have only two acts. On the other hand, since the title says *bālabhārata*, it is possible that the dramatist deals only with the early part of the Bhārata. It is not easy to say. But Rājaśekhara is proud of his achievement since in a verse in a prologue (I-12) he speaks of himself as a sort of grand-incarnation of Vālmīki (with Bhavabhūti in between). In the Viṣkambhaka of act I the author of the Rāmāyaṇa and the author of the Mahābhārata speak like two members of a mutual admiration society. Vālmīki enjoys the final word and says he must hear the story from Vyāsa himself but beginning from the arrival of the Pāṇḍavas to Draupadi's Swayamvara (the ceremony where the bride makes her choice from among the assembled competitors) marriage (Swayamvarāya pāṇḍava-pravesham). In act I the Swayamvara ends by the choice of Arjuna which fact leads to a fight among the princes. In act II there is the gambling scene, attempted disrobing of Draupadī and finally the Pāṇḍavas leaving for exile. In this play, Draupadī, unlike the female characters in other Sanskrit plays, speaks in Sanskrit and not in Prākṛt. Apparently this Rājaśekhara is different from Rājaśekhara, the author of Karpūra-mañjari since the latter is of the opinion that Sanskrit is harsh to the ears and so he prefers to write in Prakṛt.

The other play, Subhadrā-Dhanañjaya, is in five acts. The author informs us that he is the king of Keral (Keralādhinātha). He is a great admirer of Kālidāsa though he begins his play like Bhāsa with *sthāpanā*. The story deals with Arjuna's elopement with Subhadrā. The author has taken liberty with the original. He has provided Arjuna with a Vidūṣaka. Subhadrā is being carried away by a Rākṣasa. She is rescued by Arjuna and returns home. In the meanwhile Arjuna finds an ornament of Subhadrā, apparently dropped in the excitement. Already in love with her, he disguises himself as an ascetic and goes with the ornament to the Raivataka mountain. The story is made interesting by keeping Subhadrā ignorant of the fact that her rescuer, the ascetic and Arjuna are all one and the same person and not three different persons with whom she is horrified to find herself in love. Vidūṣaka, who has long been absent throughout the Rāma plays, is back on the Sanskrit stage and plays his minor but useful role in the development of the story.

However, plays of this type no more hold the Sanskrit stage. Apparently the old moral values were being seriously challenged by new forces and changed circumstances. Such plays must have been considered as examples of degeneration since it was a time not to laugh with the *Vidūṣaka* but to preach.

In these circumstances it would not surprise us if some honest soul, giving up all this make-believe, utilised drama purely for the purpose of philosophy (in an age of decadence one cannot be distinguished from the other). And so we find a play called *Prabodha Candrōdaya*, the rise of the moon, (in the form) of knowledge by one *Kriṣṇamiśra Yati*. This is purely a play where the traditional schools of philosophy have been discussed on their merits: All the characters that appear are mythical or abstract conceptions like *Viveka*, *Mahāmoha*, *Nityṛtti*, *Pravṛtti*, *Cārvāka*, *śraddhā*, *śānti*, *Upaniṣad*, *Prabodhodaya* etc.

*Prabodhacandrodaya* is a play in six acts. In act I after the usual introduction *Kāma* (God of love) and *Rati* (his wife) appear in a prologue where the former gives to the audience a synopsis of the story. The main story opens with king Discrimination (*viveka*) and his queen Understanding (*mati*.) The king desires, and the queen consents, that he should take as his consort *Upaniṣad-Devi* (Lady Upanisad) that a son *Prabodha*—Awakening—may be born. Act II takes us to the enemy's camp, so to say. Curiously enough Benares Pundits get a scathing criticism (II-I) where wicked men like *Dambha* and *Ahamkāra* (Arrogance and Vanity) conspire to prevent the birth of *Prabodha*. When *Śraddhā* (Faith) is trying to bring together king *Viveka* and lady *Upaniṣad*, *Mithyādṛṣṭi* (false understanding) the wife of *Mahāmoha* (Great Ignorance) is set on her; at the same time *Śānti*, (peace) *Śraddhā*'s daughter, is to be killed by felons like *Krodha* (Anger) and *Lobha* (Avarice) etc. Act III takes us to a different world altogether. If the Pundits of Benares are condemned as immoral hypocrites, Buddhists and Jainas and *Kāpālikas* get no better treatment either. The scene where the Buddhist and Jaina monks, in a drunken orgy, exhibit a lascivious desire for the *Kāpālikā* is brutally hilarious. The three Bohemians decide to abduct *Sāttvīkī Śraddhā* (Pure faith) who is supposed to be living in the company of one *Viṣṇubhakti* (Devotion in God *Viṣṇu*). In Act IV *śraddhā* herself is rescued

by Viṣṇubhakti while the king sends soldiers to destroy those felons. The battle is described in Act V and at the end the Buddhists are driven out of India; and so the play moves on to the last act where Lady Upaniṣad, who describes her stay with Yajñavidyā (the lore of sacrifice), with Mīmāṃsā (Ritual Science) and with Tarkavidyā (Logic) is brought to the king and the birth of Prabodha is announced. After all the learned and philosophical quest for awakening, the *Bharatavākyā* sounds almost comic when it sings that 'plenty of rain should fall on the earth, kings should protect the earth, without any disturbance' etc.

That the play is very late is evident from the treatment of the subject-matter as well as from reference to the great scholar Kumārilaśwāmin and to the banishment of Buddhism. It is an allegory pure and simple; the very characters produce an atmosphere of unreality, the last thing that a drama should do. If the earlier plays followed the purāṇic style, the Prab. C. follows the style of a treatise on philosophy. What the other founders of school of philosophy did to their commentary on the Vedānta aphorisms, Kriṣṇamiśra Yati aspires to do in the form of an allegory written as a dialogue. There is no doubt that the author is a stern-disciplined devotee of God. What he says about the book-learned Benares Pundits is enough to make every Hindu pray that he should never be born in Benares. The demoralisation of Buddhist and Jaina orders is vividly brought out in the merciless caricature of the monks. As a matter of fact, Prab. C. could be hailed as one of the best satires in Sanskrit Literature; the only objection being that the author never intended it to be such.

Kriṣṇamiśra Yati, like his immediate predecessors, was intent not on producing a drama but on giving his views, explaining and illustrating them, on the philosophical truth of the Upaniṣadic Vedānta. We have a fiery preacher here, not a dramatist. And the author is right, since before him he had found dramatists as merely moralists. Drama in Sanskrit literature simply ceased to exist when dramatists preferred philosophising to dramatising.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE END

In studying the history of drama in Sanskrit literature, one could safely come to the conclusion that immediately after the age of Bhavabhūti Sanskrit Drama came to an end. It is true that long after Bhavabhūti plays were written in Sanskrit and for a still longer period a few plays in prākrit also are to be found. But from the examples of such plays, as seen in the fore-going chapter, our main conclusion is actually re-inforced. It is not so surprising that plays in Sanskrit language discontinued. What is really as significant as surprising is the fact the very drama as a literary form suddenly disappeared and disappeared for good. Upto a century ago, no modern Indian language had any dramatic literature. And today when the various Indian languages are showing an alround literary development, modern drama unlike modern poetry, cannot be traced to any traditional form ( except of course the renderings of half-a-dozen classical Sanskrit dramas ).

1. In an earlier place ( Chap. VII ) we suggested that the dramatic form of literature was not germane to the culture of the Aryans. The very religious-mindedness of the early Aryans prevented them from enjoying a dramatic representation. For a long time Sanskrit language could not be used for secular subjects; and by the time Sanskrit language could be used for popular literature, Sanskrit had ceased to be the language of the people.

2. Secondly, Sanskrit drama, from its earliest days, belonged to the kings and the rich peoples. Bhāsa, in his *Pratimā*, tells us how dramatic performances were palace-entertainments. In the plays of Sri Harṣa, though they are performed, as the Sūtradhāra tells us, during the festivals, these festivals are not so much public occasions, as celebrations within the regions of the palace. Probably the fact that most of the Sanskrit plays have their scenes laid within the four walls of the palace is a corollary of this very situation. It is true that Bharata talks of drama as *sārvavarṇika*; but it is doubtful if available literary dramas answer the democratic condition of Bharata. Even when Kālidāsa speaks *nāṭyam bhinnarūcer janasya bahudhārāpi ekam sanārādhānam* ( nāṭya is the common entertainment of the people of different

tastes ), the context makes us wonder if by *nāṭya* Kālidāsa means dance and not dramatic performance. Even if *nāṭya* were to mean a dramatic performance, in Kālidāsa's opinion it was a *common entertainment to various people* and not an *entertainment of common people*. That even in modern days dramas in Bengal originated under the patronage and within the four walls of the mansions of rich people seems to be a genuine relic of tradition. Sanskrit drama did not belong to the people. And as the Aryan tradition was conveyed through Sanskrit and as Sanskrit gradually became merely the language of the learned, Sanskrit dramas could not make an appeal to the common man.

3. It should be remembered, in this connection, that from the days of Aśoka Buddhism ( and probably Jainism ), like Puritanism in England, definitely and deliberately discouraged popular entertainments. There was a time, after the Gupta Era, when Buddhism ( as illustrated by king Sri Harṣa ) once again became the fashion of the court and the passion of the *savants* : more so in the north. This accounts for the fact of more plays being found mainly in southern versions. Between the revival of Buddhism and Śankara's triumphant war against Buddhism on an all-India front the interval was too short to encourage dramatic literature. And for a few centuries after Śankara, the poets and pundits and even the public, dazzled by that philosopher's brilliance, could see nothing else. By the time every thinking Hindu was *māyā*-minded, the Muslim invasions began with devastating results.

4. The *élite* of Hindu society, for reasons mentioned above, was no longer interested in dramatic or any other kind of secular literature. Though Sanskrit drama never belonged so much to the common man, we would be wrong in believing that the common man had no dramas of his own. Tradition of the Indian stage gives us an idea of the type of plays that existed before and after and in spite of Kālidāsa. As time went on the earlier traditional heroes like Vikrama, Udayana, Duṣyanta, etc. must have become absolute strangers to the common man. And we do find that even the few Sanskrit dramatists of the later period have ceased to write about such hero-kings. The one story that was known all over the country down to the commonest man was the story of Rāmāyaṇa and so we find every drama-

tist repeating that story retaining (almost standardising) all the popular elements of myth and superstition. This is one of the explanations for the fact that the Rāma plays were written in monotonous repetition by so many dramatists. It is only after the tenth century A. D. that for the first time after Bhāsa, we come across a few plays based on the story of the other epic viz., the Māhabhārata. Such are the plays, the Bālabhārata of Rājaśekhara, the Subhadrā-Dhanañjaya of Kulaśekharavarīma-bhūpāla and Dūtāngada by Subhaṭa etc. The fact that most of the later Sanskrit dramatists belong to the south is significant enough. The two epics, as could be seen from Dravidian literature, were now being popularised in the south. And the Muslim invasions of the north made the south of India the inevitable champion of ancient Aryan culture and tradition.

5. That even as late as the 15th century A.D., plays could be written in Sanskrit is in itself an eloquent evidence of the decay and death of Sanskrit drama. Sanskrit had long ceased to be the language of the people. Even the respect with which Sanskrit was compulsorily listened to seems to have abated. In the one Prākṛt play available to us viz., the Karpūramāñjari, the author, Rājaśekhara, tells us almost as much in the prologue where he is explaining why he writes an all-Prākṛt play.

paruṣāḥ sanskrīta-gumphāḥ prākṛta-gumpho pi bhavati  
 sukumāraḥ ! puruṣa-mahilānām yāvadiha antaram teṣu  
 tāvat || (92) . . . . . (I-8 ; Sanskrit rendering)

“ Sanskrit phrases are harsh indeed, Prākṛt phrases are sweet (and sonorous). The difference between the two is the difference between (the style of) a man and a woman.”

But as we read the prākṛt play we are struck by another fact which made the decay of such dramas (Sanskrit or Prākṛt) inevitable. The Karpūramāñjari is called a sāṭaka i. e. prākṛt play with no prologues or interlogues. The whole play is divided into four scenes (javanikāntara). In the first scene, (1) the king and queen describe the spring season, (2) the Vidūṣaka and the palace-maid indulge in mutual abuses couched in phrases with a farfetched

sense, and (3) a Kāpālika Bhairavānanda performs magic by the power of which he brings the heroine. The scene ends with the description of sunset. In scene (ii) all the usual sickening description of love-lorn condition and of standardised excitants is found and the scene ends, again, with the description of sunset. In the third scene the king and his jester narrate their dreams, after which Karpūramāñjari, the heroine, appears on the stage; a clandestine meeting of the king with her is arranged and the scene ends with the description of rising moon. In the last scene inspite of the queen's strong guard, the king succeeds in seeing the heroine with whom he is ultimately married through the help of the Kāpālika Bhairvānanda.

If we expected that Rājaśekhara, because he wrote all in Prākṛt, would write an original style we would be completely disappointed. Tradition has been too strong for all these writers; as a matter of fact, traditional rules of dramaturgy had such sway that it was easier for an *n*'th rate author following these rules, to write a strictly 'correct' play than for a genuine artist to write successfully in an original style. Dramas, paying more attention to traditional items of description, had deteriorated to poems punctuated either by description in prose or by incidents of love-intrigue. The beginning, the end, the incidents, the stage-devices, the sentiments, the objects of description—nay almost every detail of a Sanskrit play was so fixed by rules of dramaturgy that except in the names of the author, the title and the characters, one play could not be effectively distinguished from another play. No wonder then that only Rāma-plays became popular because there at least you acquired the merit of having witnessed God's own doings.

6. And so it came about that the religious-mindedness of the Aryans, which once did not encourage drama, did now discourage it ultimately to its final decadence. The Aryan religion, never involving communal worship, was least likely to encourage dramatic performances. It was later, after the 10th century A.D. when the Bhakti doctrine was revived and communal worship and religious festivals came into vogue that religion was partly responsible for the revival of drama. But that

was the standardised Rāma-play. It took centuries and centuries before the artist could successfully rebel against doctrinaire or religious dramas ( *yātrā* ) and make drama once again the dream of Bharata, viz. a mirror of 'the doings of the world' ( *loka-carita* ), of the aspiration of Kālidāsa—viz. 'a common entertainment to persons of different tastes,' or lastly the boast of Bhavabhūti, viz. :

"Subtle representation of different emotions; actions, pleasing and intimate; deeds of love and adventure leading along a line; lively dialogues and clever speech." (MM. 1.4)

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## APPENDIX A

## CĀRUDATTA AND MṚCHHAKATIKA

Since the discovery of plays that have been ascribed to Bhāsa ( Bhāsanāṭaka cakra ) the authorship of the Mṛchhakatikam has become a more complicated problem. Śūdraka has been described as the author of the Mṛchhakatika in the prologue but the three verses in which his description occurs become, by their very style, liable to suspicion as regards the authenticity of their contents. (1) Firstly, in 1—3 Śūdraka is described as Dvijamukhyatama. (2) Secondly, in 1—5 he is described as a Kṣitipāla. (3) lastly, in all the three verses he is mentioned in the past tense. Add to these the fact that he is mentioned as having lived for 100 years and ten days and then immolated himself, the whole description becomes fantastic. If the Sūtradhāra himself is so uncertain about the author, it would not be unjustified on our part to hold that Śūdraka could not be the author of this play.

And then we come across a play called ( Daridra ) Cārudattam ascribed to Bhāsa and first published in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series. The published play is in four acts. One of the two MSS., as the editor mentions, has the colophon avasitam Cārudattam. But it is obvious to any one going through the four acts that the play could not end there. The Mṛch. has ten acts. The hero and the heroine are united in act V. From this one could expect the Cār. to contain at least one act more to make the story complete. However, no Ms. gives the V act ; on the other hand, as mentioned above, one, out of two MSS. shows that the play ( Cār. ) ended with the fourth act.

Whether originally the Cār. had more than four acts, there is no evidence from any source. This in itself would make all criticism irrelevant ; a comparison of the Cār. with the Mṛch. would be inconclusive. However, even with the available four acts the close similarity between two plays is very striking as not only the story and the development but even words and verses are common. When the author of the Mṛch. is not definitely known to the Sūtradhāra of that very play and when there is such an almost word-to-word similarity with the Cār.

the temptation to believe that the latter was the source of and earlier than the Mṛch. would appear justified. At present, the general opinion is that Bhāsa, an earlier dramatist, wrote the Cār. and a later writer either completed it or copied it as Mṛchhakaṭika.

In fairness to those who hold this view, let it be said that they are the first to realise many an objection against that view. For one thing, if there are only four acts in the Cār. ( and the story is not complete there ) what reason can we find that made Bhāsa leave the play unfinished ? Secondly, if the Mṛchhakaṭikam is only a completion of the Cār. how is it that from the very first act we find not only significant deviations but too many verbal changes and different lines or sometimes entirely different verses themselves ? If, on the other hand, the Mṛchhakaṭikam is modelled on the Cār. how is it that a dramatist who could write and write well six independent acts could not write the first four without copying freely from the Cār. ? As long as these two questions could not be answered satisfactorily, we shall not be justified in supporting the generally held view.

To begin with, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to explain why Bhāsa should have left the Crāudatta unfinished. That the play is unfinished there is no doubt about it. Even as the fourth act ends we are left with the expectation of the heroine going to meet the hero. Moreover, durdina ( the stormy day ) that is described in act V of the Mṛchhakaṭika is referred to by the Cheṭi before the fourth act of Cārudatta ends. Just a little before that, when the heroine informs the Cheṭi about the love episode of Sajjalaka and Madanikā ending in their marriage, the Cheṭi says :—Priyam me amṛtāṅka nāṭakam samvṛttam. It is a very curious and unusual remark which, on second thoughts, makes us wonder if it is not a criticism of the other play viz. the Mṛchhakaṭika. Before we hazard an opinion on this, let us review more carefully the so-called close resemblances in the two plays.

When we remember that the Cārudatta is available only in its first four acts we obviously expect that it would not contain the sub-plot of the revolution against king Pālaka. This subplot is fully developed only in the last five acts of the Mṛchhakaṭika. But it is strange why the fifth act is not available in

Cārudatta though that act only describes the meeting of the hero with the heroine. The Cārudatta not only does not contain the sub-plot as developed in the last acts of the Mṛchhakaṭika but even the casual reference to it in the earlier acts of Mṛchhakaṭika are not to be found in Cārudatta. Thus in the prologue of the Mṛchhakaṭika, the Sūtradhāra getting angry with Cūrṇavṛdha says:— Āh dāsyāḥ putra Cūrṇavṛdha kadā nu khalu twām kūpitena rajñā Pālakena navavadhūkeśakalāpamiva saugandha chhedyamānam prekṣiṣye. In the Cārudatta, however only that context in the prologue is not to be found and hence there is no reference to the king Pālaka. The gambler's scene in Mṛchh. II is entirely absent in the Cār. Here also, among others, there is a reference to the sub-plot; Dardurakah:— Kathitam ca mama priyavayasyena Šarvilakena yathā kila Āryakanāmā Gopāladārakah Siddhādeśena samādiṣṭo rājā bhaviṣyateeti. Similarly, in Mṛchh. III the hero tells us that it was one rebhila who gave the music performance. This Rebhila (act IV, Mṛchh.) is mentioned as the friend of Šarvilaka also. But in the Cār. we are told that it was Šabala who gave the music performance. From all this, it appears as if the Cār. is making a studious effort to eschew all references to the sub-plot of the revolt of Āryaka.

The omission of the gambler's scene in the Cār. suggests another possibility as could be verified by other examples. The gambler's scene, as shown in the Mṛchh., has that peculiar stage technique which is represented throughout the play. Besides an apartment of Vasantasenā that is revealed at the opening of the act, we go over the open road, a temple, a crowd scene and then we follow the Saṁvāhaka running ultimately into Vasantasenā's apartment. This change of scene is avoided in the Cār. Not only here, but even in other places where the Mṛchh. changes the scene, the Cār. does not. Even in act I, during the chase of the heroine by Šakāra, the Cār. shows a clumsiness by introducing the scene between a verse by the hero and his mention of the offering later—the idea of the verse and the offering not at all being related as they are in the Mṛchh. Similarly in act IV all those changes of scene where Madanikā meets Šarvilaka and where the Vidūṣaka passes through many apartments are entirely omitted in the Cār.

In spite of the 'almost word-to-word' resemblances, the variations appear to be really more significant. The more we analyse variations the more obvious it appears that only two facts govern all of them: (1) the avoidance of all reference to the sub-polt, and (2) the omission of all contexts involving a change of scene within the body of an act.

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## APPENDIX B

## BHĀSA'S PLAYS

Besides the peculiarities that struck late T. Ganapati Sastri in all the plays, there is one simple, striking, internal evidence that may help one not only in discussing the age of the author or authors but also in settling the authorship of the plays. This evidence consists in the character and number of slokas (i. e. verses in Anuṣṭub metres). To enable the readers to follow the discussion below, the slokas may be tabulated as follows:—

Title of the play	No. of slokas	Total no. of verses
S. V.	27	57
P. Y.	28	66
P. R.	73	152
Avi.	15	97
Bāl.	37	103
M. V.	32	51
D. V.	22	56
D. G.	21	52
K. B.	4	25
U. B.	12	66
Prat.	74	156
Abhi.	65	153
Cār.	17	55

From the above table it will be seen that in some plays the proportion of slokas to verses in other metres is absolutely higher than in others. If we divide the plays into two groups the division, of course, would be artificial. Still there is no harm in classifying S. V., P. Y., P. R., M. V., D. Y., and D. G. as one group, and Avi., Bāl., K. B. and U. B. as the second.

It is interesting to note that in no play belonging to the second group does the first verse suggest the dramatic personae as happens, for example, in S. V. or P. Y. or P. R. As regards the Bharata-Vākyā the usual form seems either to be later addition, or is missing or is to be found in an entirely different form in these four plays. In Avi. it repeats the sense of the previous

verse. In Bāl. it is probably a later addition ( cf D. V. and see below ). As for K. B., it may be mentioned that one MS does not give the Bharata-Vākyā at all. In U. B. it is not to be found in the usual form ( The editor, however, writes a footnote in such cases saying,

itah prāk bharatavākyam ityapekṣitam bhāti )

Even as regards the Sthāpanā which is supposed to be characteristic of this group of plays, there are some interesting points to be noted. In Bāl., for example, there is no "iti sthāpanā" after the exit of sutradhāra while K. B. has "prastāvanā" instead of "sthāpanā."

Lastly, mention may be made of the fact that in all these four plays Kṛṣṇa in some form or other is praised not only in the beginning verse but also in the last. The reference to 'Rājasimha, the lion of kings' is either a later addition or comes so abruptly as to be a self-betraying suspect.

In the first group itself M. V. and D. G. could be distinguished from the other three. In the first place, the opening verse does not, like that in the latter, suggest the characters in the play. Then the Bharata-Vākyā, too, is not the usual prayer put into Anuṣṭubh metre. The ending of Bāl. and D. V. is identical. As regards the sthāpanā though we find it in these three plays, we are tempted to regard it as an imitation of the other three plays. The first verse in D. G., for example, runs thus :

nārāyaṇas tribhuvanaika pārāyaṇo vah  
pāyādūpāyagatayuktikaras surāṇām  
lokatrāyāviratanāṭakatantravastu—  
prastāvanā-pratisamāpana-sūtradhāraḥ

In the last line sūtradhāra is mentioned in connection with prastāvanā and one wonders if Bhāsa learnt his Nāṭya-Śāstra after writing plays like S. V., P. Y. and P. R. In later plays "Prastāvanā" is the scene in which Sūtradhāra figures.

Lastly, in these three plays the Bharata-Vākyā is consistently laudatory of Śri Kṛṣṇa.

Now we are in a position to arrange these plays into a more logical way. The first group consists of S. V., P. Y. and P. R which resemble each other in numerous ways and the rest make

the second group inasmuch as they differ from the first three and mutually in imitating, and differing from, the first group. The grammatical irregularities which T. Ganapati Sastri has shown ( Intro. p. 42 ) are mostly from ( and occur probably only in ) the plays belonging to the first group viz. S. V., P. Y. and P. R.

That the plays of the second group are imitative of those in the first may be explained by some examples. Imitations as a rule are a failure; while influence, pure and simple, which, by the way, should be distinguished from imitation, may sometimes yield better results. In P. Y. Act II the parents ( viz. the king and the queen ) discuss the matter of their daughter's marriage. The discussion is carried in a homely way and the author has utilised the chance to give utterance to some homely truth. The anxieties of both the father and the mother are vividly and separately depicted. After opening the topic before the Kancuki the king says :

duhituḥ pradānakāle duḥkhaśīlā hi mātarah  
tasmād devī tāvadāhūyatām

This introduction of the queen to the discussion may be compared with a similar scene in Avi. Act I. The king enters with the following remarks :

iṣṭā makhā dvijavarāśca mayi prasannāḥ  
prajñāpitā bhayarasam samadā narendrāḥ  
evam-vidhasya ca na mesti manah-praharṣah  
kanyapitur hi satatam bahu cintāṇyam  
ketumati, gaccha, devīm ānaya

What is a natural affair and has been brought about in a simple way in P. Y., has been, it seems, artificially introduced in Avi. Even then the queen in P. Y. is much different from that in Avi. The former carries on freely the domestic discussion while the queen in Avi. has to enter only to be lectured by the king.

devi, vivāhā nāma bahuśah parīkṣya kartavyā bhavanti and so on. Though disturbed in the middle of discussion by the glad news of Vatsarājā's capture, the queen in P. Y. is not dismissed but sits and discusses till the end of the act while in Avi. after the king's lecture she has to sit silently till the end of the act.

The plays belonging to the group containing the Cār. are of a different and an inferior author than that of the group containing Svapnavāsavadatta and others. This suggestion of mine is supported by the comparison of the Cār. and the Mṛchh. as described above. That comparison shows to us the possibility of the Cār. itself being a revised or a stage-version of the Mṛchh. With the latter play before him the author of the Cār. freely used the names nāyakah (for Cārudatta), Gaṇikā (for Vasantasenā), Sajjalaka (Pkt for Śarvilaka) and so on. But as he revised the Mṛchh. the author of the Cār. must have found two things he disliked: one, a successful revolt against a reigning king and the other the sufferings of the hero and that too at the hands of the King's brother-in-law. Besides, there are scenes of apparent death of the heroine, of the death-sentence and of the execution place and of Cārudatta's wife attempting *Sati*. As the Ceṭi in act IV of Cār. says, the author of the revised version did not like any death-scenes or associations with; he preferred an amṛta ('no-death') ankanāṭaka. A Bhāsa who could show Duryodhana die on the stage would never put such a limitation on his art.

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## APPENDIX C

### A NOTE ON BHARATA'S "THEATRE-HOUSE"

In the second chapter of his *Nātyaśāstra*, Bharata, the author, refers to and discusses in detail the theatre-house ( *nātyagṛha*, *nātyāśālā*, *prakṣāgāra*, - *gṛha* etc.). To begin with, the idea of a theatre-house seems to have forced itself on Bharata. Left to himself, Bharata does not appear to feel the necessity of a theatre. But in Chapter I, the first performance of Bharata had the misfortune of being overrun by the demons and that made Bharata think of a theatre secured from disturbances from all around. In other words, the purpose is to have an enclosure safe from outside disturbances. Rarely does Bharata speak of a permanently built structure with a roof as a theatre.

Even when Bharata speaks of a theatre there are other considerations that give it a particular form or shape. He mentions three kinds of theatres:

One : *vikṛṣṭa*, long drawn out, where the length is greater than the width;

Two : *cata-(-u--)-rasra*, where all the four sides are equal or where every point is equi-distant from the centre; i. e. a square or a circle; and,

Three : *tryasra*, a triangle where all the three sides are equal.

Bharata also gives three measures of length (*hasta*) viz. 108, 64 and 32.

Thus the *vikṛṣṭa* could be

- (i)  $108 \times 64$
- (ii)  $108 \times 32$ , and
- (iii)  $64 \times 32$

The *catarasra*, like-wise, could have three different measures of dimensions :—

- (i)  $108 \times 108$
- (ii)  $64 \times 64$ , and
- (iii)  $32 \times 32$

Lastly the *tryasra* type would be

- (i)  $108 \times 108 \times 108$
- (ii)  $64 \times 64 \times 64$
- (iii)  $32 \times 32 \times 32$

In all these three groups of three each it is said that the biggest (*jyeṣṭha*) is meant for gods and their deeds, the middle (*madhyama*) for gods and mortals, mixed in actions, and the smallest (*avara* or *kaniṣṭha*) for only mortals.

This also tells us that to Bharata a theatre-house is not a permanent structure. According to the type of the plays, the strength of the cast and the likely strength of the audience attracted by the particular type—the theatre is to be constructed. But however big the theatre, Bharata says that the audibility and visibility must be clear and distinct to the last man.

Unfortunately the text of the *natyaśāstra* is very corrupt; scholars have been very liberal in thrusting their own views on Bharata to such an extent that today we have a confusing number of circles and squares and triangles to describe Bharata's conception of a theatre. Wading carefully through the shambles it is not difficult to re-construct the simple, straightforward idea of Bharata. It is unfair to credit him with geometrical puzzles.

First of all, whatever the shape or the dimension of the theatre one half is turned into an auditorium (*ranga mandapa*) and the other half utilised for the performance (*ranga bhūmi*). The acting area (to be explained later) roughly comes in the centre of the theatre. If we keep this in mind, then, with a little more attention, we find that in every type of the theatre the audience will be on three sides of the stage. In the part of the auditorium facing the stage Bharata advises rising rows of seats. The arrangement of seats on the two sides of the stage is different and depends on the arrangement of the acting stage.

That half of the structure which is used for staging purposes is further subdivided into three equal parts, each part further away from the auditorium half. The one nearest to the auditorium is called the *rangapīṭha* and this entire area is used for acting purposes. The one adjoining it is called the *rangasīrṣa* (the head of the stage) and this must always be on a level higher

(as prescribed) than that of the acting area. The characters that enter subsequently appear on this and all characters make their exit through this. The type of plays we have in Sanskrit would justify us in generalising that prologues, interludes etc. (i.e. minor characters) acted in the acting area and the main episode (i.e. kings and heroines) on the raised platform of the *raṅgaśirṣa*. The remaining third of the stage came after the *raṅgapiṭha* (but on the level of the acting area) and was called the *nepathyagṛha*; here the characters made their entry (sometimes using a *nepathyā* cloth curtain) and their exit, using it as a rest-house before and after the entries and exits, and here also they put on their costumes (*nepathyā*) after making up in another part of the stage.

It is interesting to note that whenever Bharata mentions the dimensions of the acting area he refers to what he calls the *matta vārani*s (lit. that connected with an intoxicated elephant). It is equally interesting to note that not only modern scholars but even earlier commentators in some cases show that there is no clear conception of what a *matta-vārani* is. An elephant, in Indian tradition, is the guarding deity. Each of the eight directions (east, south, west and north and S. E., S. W., N. E. and N. W.) is guarded by an elephant called *dig-gaja*. It is not unusual to find either at the front or the sides of a building (of those early days) an elephant with its trunk raised placed as if for a foundation. The two sides of the stage, thus had two elephants looking as triumphant as an intoxicated elephant. On the backs of these elephants were platforms on level with the *raṅgaśirṣa*. i. e. higher than the *raṅgapiṭha*. Indra, the god of rain and thunder, was the first deity propitiated by Bharata before the performance; he had to, because inspite of the enclosure all round the theatre was open to the skies where Indra rode his cloud-elephants. So Bharata says that Indra and similar important personages were to be seated on these *matta-vārani*s, the side boxes. Even to this day in some village performances this is exactly the accommodation provided to the village élite.



APPENDIX D

SANSKRIT VERSES IN DEVANAGARI SCRIPT

( 1 ) इदं शतसहस्रं तु  
 श्लोकानां पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।  
 उपाख्यानैः सह शेयम्  
 श्राव्यं भारतसुत्तमम् ॥ ( 1-i-77 )

( 2 ) रस इति कः पदार्थः । अत्र उच्यते,  
 आस्वाद्यत्वात् । कथमास्वाद्यो रसः ।  
 अत्र उच्यते । यथा हि नानाव्यञ्जनसंस्कृत-  
 मन्त्रं भुजाना रसानास्वादश्रन्ति सुमनसः  
 पुरुषा हर्षादीर्णशाप्यधिगच्छन्ति तथा  
 नानाभावाभिनयव्यञ्जितान् वाग्इणासत्त्वोपेतान्  
 स्थायिभावानास्वादयन्ति सुमनसः प्रेक्षकाः ।

( 3 ) येषां काव्याभ्यासानुशीलनवशाद्विशदीभूते मनोमुकुरे  
 वर्णनीयतन्मयीभवनयोग्यता ते हृदयसंवादभाजः सहृदयाः ।

( 4 ) इतिहासमिमं विग्राः पुराणं परिचक्षते ।  
 कृष्णद्वैपायनप्रोक्तं नैमित्तारण्यवासिषु ॥  
 पूर्वं प्रचोदितः सूर्तः पिता मे लोमहर्षणः ।  
 तस्मादहमुपश्रुत्य प्रवक्ष्यामि यथातथम् ॥

( 5 ) श्राव्यानामुत्तमं चेदम्

( 6 ) श्राव्यं श्रुतिसुखं चैव

( 7 ) विस्तार्यैतन्महद्ज्ञानमृषिः संक्षिप्य चात्रवात् ।  
 इष्टं हि विदुषां लोके समासव्यासधारणम् ॥

( 8 ) अलंकृतं श्रूमैः शब्दैः समर्यैर्दिव्यमानुषैः ।  
 छन्दोवृत्तैश्च विविधैरन्वितं विदुषां प्रियम् ॥

(9) दुःखार्तानां श्रमार्तानां शोकार्तानां तपस्त्विनाम् ।  
 विश्रामजननं लोके नाश्वमेतद्भविष्यति ॥  
 विनोदजननं काले नाश्वमेतद्भविष्यति ।

(10) नाटयं भिन्नहर्चेऽनस्य बहुधाप्येकम् समाराधनम् ।

(11) भूम्ना रसानां गहनाः प्रयोगाः  
 सौहार्दहृद्यानि विचेष्टितानि ।  
 औद्धत्यमायोजितकामसूत्रं  
 चित्राः कथा वाचि विद्यता च ॥

(12) आनन्दनिष्ठन्दिषु रूपकेषु  
 व्युत्पत्तिमात्रं फलमल्पबुद्धिः ।  
 योऽपीतिहासादिवदाह साधुः  
 तस्मै नमः स्वादुपराङ्मुखाय ॥

(13) न तद्ज्ञानं न तच्छिल्पं न सा विद्या न सा कला ।  
 न स योगो न तर्कम् नाट्येऽस्मिन्यन्न दृश्यते ॥  
 सर्वशास्त्राणि शिल्पानि कर्माणि विविधानि च ।  
 वेदविद्येतिहासानामाख्यानपरिकल्पनम् ॥

(14) आख्यापितो विदित्वाऽहं नाश्ववेदं पितामहात् ।  
 पुत्रानध्यापयं योग्यान् प्रयोगं चास्य तत्वतः ॥

(15) नाश्वयोगे तु कर्तव्यं काव्यं भाषासमाश्रयम् ।

(16) देशभाषाक्रियावेषलक्षणाः स्युः प्रवृत्तयः ।  
 लोकादेवाधिगम्येता यथौचित्यं प्रयोजयेत् ॥

(17) यत्र कविगत्मबुद्ध्या वस्तुशरीरं च नाटकं चैव ।  
 औत्पत्तिकं प्रकुरुते प्रकरणमेत द्वृघैर्ज्ञेयम् ॥  
 विप्रवणिक्सचिवानां पुरोहितामात्यसार्थवाहानाम् ।  
 चरितं यदनेकविधं तद्देशेयं प्रकरणं नाम ॥

नोदात्तनायककृतं न दिव्यचरितं न राजसंभोगम् ।  
 बाह्यजनसंप्रयुक्तं विशेषं प्रकरणं तज्जैः ॥  
 सचिवश्रेष्ठिब्राह्मणपुरोहितामात्यसार्थवाहानाम् ।  
 गृहवार्ता यत्र भवेत्..... ॥

(18) देवासुरबीजकृतं प्रख्यातोदात्तनायकं चैव ।

(19) या वाक्प्रधाना पुरुषप्रयोज्या  
 स्त्रीवर्जिता संस्कृतवाक्ययुक्ता ।  
 स्वनामधेयैर्मरतैः प्रयुक्ता  
 सा भारती नाम भवेत्तु वृत्तिः ॥

(20) वागङ्गाभिनयवती सत्त्वोत्थानवचनप्रकरणेषु ।  
 सत्त्वाधिकारयुक्ता विशेया सात्त्वती वृत्तिः ॥

(21) अव्यक्तरूपं सत्त्वं हि शेषं भावरसाश्रयम् ।  
 यथास्थानरसोपेतं रोमाञ्चास्त्रादिभिर्गुणैः ॥

(22) या श्लक्षणेपथ्यविशोषवित्रा  
 स्त्रीसंयुता या बहुनृत्यगीता ।  
 कामोपभोगप्रभवोपचारा  
 तीं कैशिकीं वृत्तिमुदाहरन्ति ॥

(23) कैशिकीं श्लक्षणेपथ्या शङ्खासरस-संभवा ।  
 अशक्या पुरुषैः साधु प्रयोकुं स्त्रीजनादते ॥

(25) प्रस्तावपातप्लुतलंघितानि  
 चान्यानि मायाकृतमिन्द्रजालम् ।  
 चित्राणि युक्तानि च यत्र नित्यम्  
 तां ताहृशीमारभट्टीं वदन्ति ॥

(25) मायेन्द्रजालबहुलो बहुपुरुषोत्थानभेदसंयुक्तः ।  
 देवासुरराक्षसभूतयक्षनागाश्च पुरुषाः स्युः ॥

(26) नैव चारणदारेषु विधिनात्मोपजीविषु ।  
सज्जयन्ति हि ते नारीनिंगूदाश्चारयन्ति ते ॥

(27) स नृत्मो नहुषो अर्मत्सुजातः ।  
पुरोऽभिनदर्हन् दस्युहत्ये ।

(28) न वेदव्यवहारोऽयं संश्राव्यं शूद्रजातिषु ।  
तस्मात्सुजापरं वेदं पञ्चमे सार्ववर्णिकम् ॥

(29) एवं बुधः परं भावं सोऽस्मीति मनसा स्मरन् ।  
वागङ्गातिर्लाभिश्चेष्टाभिश्च समाचरेत् ॥

(30) यथा दारुमर्यां योषां नरः स्थिरसमाहितः ।  
इङ्ग्यत्यङ्गमङ्गानि तथा राजान्निमाः प्रजाः ॥

(31) स्थपतिर्बुद्धिसंपन्नो वास्तुविद्याविशारदः ।  
इत्यब्रवीत्सूत्रधारः सूतो पौराणिकस्तदा ॥

(32) पुष्टनक्षत्रं योगे तु शुक्रम् सूत्राम् प्रसास्येत

(33) न महाजनपरिवारं कर्तव्यं नाटकं प्रकरणं वा ।  
ये तत्र कार्याः पुरुषाश्चत्वारः पञ्च वा स्युः ॥

(34) अव्रतानाममन्त्राणां जातिमात्रोपजीविनाम् ।  
सहस्रशः समेतानां परिषत्त्वं न विद्यते ॥

(35) प्रयुज्य विधिनैवं तु पूर्वरङ्गं प्रयोगतः ।  
स्थापकः प्रविशेच्चत्रसूत्रधारणुणाकृतिः ॥

(36) गुणवति उपायनिलये स्थितिहेतो साधिके त्रिवर्गस्य ।  
मद्भवननीतिविद्ये कार्यादार्ये द्रुतमपैहि ॥

(37) वृत्तवर्तिष्यमाणानां कथांशानां निर्दर्शकः ।  
संक्षेपार्थस्तु विष्कम्भो मध्यपात्रप्रयोजितः ॥

(38) तद्देवानुदात्तोत्त्या नीचपात्रप्रयोजितः ।  
प्रवेशोङ्कद्यस्यान्तः शोपार्थस्योपसूचकः ॥

(39) नटी विदूषको वाऽपि पारिपार्श्वक एव वा ।  
सूत्रधारेण सहिताः संलापं यत्र कुर्वते ।  
आमुखं ततु विजेयं नाम्ना प्रस्तावनाऽपि सा ॥

(40) ( i ) लोकेग गृहीतस्य कुम्भीलकर्यास्ति वा प्रतिवचनम् ।  
( ii ) प्रावृण्णदीव अप्रसन्ना गता देवी ।  
( iii ) छिन्नहस्तो मत्स्ये पलायिते निर्विण्णो धीवरो भणति  
धर्मो मे भविष्यतीति ।  
( iv ) अलमत्र धृण्या । अपराधी शासनीयः ।  
( v ) कदाऽपि सत्पुरुषाः शोकवक्तव्या न भवन्ति, न तु  
प्रवातेऽपि निष्कम्पा गिरयः ।  
( vi ) पण्डितपरितोषप्रत्यया ननु मूढा जातिः ।  
( vii ) न खलु मातापितरौ भर्तृवियोगदुःखितां दुहितरं द्रष्टुं  
पारयतः ।  
( viii ) दरिद्र आतुर इव वैदेनोपनीयमानमौषधमिच्छसि ॥

(41) प्रासादगृह्यानानि नाटयोपकरणानि च  
न शक्यानि तथा कर्तुं यथोक्तमिह लक्षणैः ॥  
लोकधर्मो भवेत्वन्या नात्यधर्मो तथापरा  
स्वभावो लोकधर्मो तु नात्यधर्मो विकारतः ॥

(42) नास्माकं संमता नाटये गुरुत्वात्खेददा हि सा

(43) ( नाटयेन नूपुरमुत्सार्य चापनीय किंचित्परिक्रम्य हस्तेन  
परामृश्य )  
अम्मो भित्तिपरामरिससूडदं पक्षवदुआरअं कखु एदम्  
जाणामि अ सज्जोण्ण गेहस्य संकदं पक्षवदुआरम् ।

(44) वृत्तर्वार्थमाणानां कथांशानां निर्दर्शकः ।  
 संक्षेपार्थस्तु विष्कम्भो मध्यपात्रप्रयोजितः ॥  
 तद्वदेवानुदात्तोक्त्या नीचपात्रप्रयोजितः ।  
 प्रवेशोऽङ्गद्रयस्यान्तः शेषार्थस्योपसूचकः ॥

(45) अन्तर्जवनिकासंस्थैश्चूलिकार्थस्य सूचना ।

(46) अङ्गान्तपात्रैरङ्गकास्यं भिन्नाङ्गकस्थार्थसूचनात् ।

(47) अङ्गकावतारस्त्वङ्गवन्ते पातोऽङ्गकस्याविभागतः ।

(48) पूर्वरङ्गं विधायादौ सूत्रधारे विनिर्गते ।  
 प्रविश्य तद्वदपरः कान्यमास्थापयेन्नरः ॥

(49) अपेक्षितं परित्यज्य नीरसं वस्तुविस्तरम् ।  
 यदा संदर्शयेच्छेषं कुर्याद्विष्कम्भकं तदा ॥

(50) रम्यं जुगुप्सितमुदारमथापि नीचम् ।  
 उत्रं प्रसादि गहनं विकृतं च वस्तु ।  
 यदाप्यवस्तु कविभावकभाव्यमानम् ।  
 तन्नास्ति यन्न रसभावमुपैति लोके ॥

(51) चारीं गर्तीं प्रचरति प्रहरत्यभीक्षणम् ।  
 संशिक्षिते नरपतिर्बलिवांस्तु भीमः ।

(52) विमुच्य रोषं परिगृह्य धर्मम् ।  
 कुलप्रवालं परिगृह्यतां नः ।

(53) माता हि मनुष्याणां दैवतानां च दैवतम्

(54) राज्यं नाम नृपात्मजैः सहृदयैर्जित्वा रिपुं भुज्यते ।  
तत्त्वोके न तु याच्यते न तु पुनर्दीनाय वा दीयते ॥

(55) त्रैगुण्योद्भवमत्र लोकचरितं नानारसं दृश्यते  
नाट्यं भिन्नरुचेज्जनस्य बहुधाऽप्येकं समाराधनम्

(56) प्रणयिषु वा दक्षिण्यादथवा सद्वस्तुपुरुषबहुमानात् ।  
शृणुतं मनोभिरंवहितैः क्रियामिमां कालिदासस्य ॥

(57) अये किं नु खलु मद्विज्ञापनानन्तरं कुररीणामिवाकाशो शब्दः  
श्रूयते । .....भवतु, ज्ञातम् ।

(58) मारिष, बहुशस्तु पूर्वेषां कवीनां दृष्टः प्रयोगवन्धः ।  
सोऽहमय विक्रमोर्वशीयं नामापूर्वं नाटकं प्रयोक्ष्ये ।

(59) अये विवेकविश्रान्तमभिहितं भवता, पश्य ।  
पुराणमित्येव न साधु सर्वम्  
न चापि काव्यं नवमित्यवद्यम् ।  
सन्तः परीक्ष्यान्यतरद्वजन्ते  
मूढः परप्रत्ययनेयबुद्धिः ॥

(60) सर्वान्तःपुरवनिताव्यापारं प्रति निवृत्तहृदयस्य ।  
सा वामलोचना मे स्नेहस्यैकायनीभूता ॥

(61) प्रेक्षतां भवान् न खत्त्वस्याः प्रतिच्छन्दा-  
त्परिहीयते मधुरता ।

(62) साधु रे पिङ्गलवानर, सुषु परित्रातस्त्वया  
सङ्कटात्सपक्षः ।

(63) ममापि च क्षपयतु नीललोहितः  
पुनर्भवं परिगतशक्तिरात्मभूः ॥

(64) अनातुरोत्कण्ठितयोः प्रसिद्धता  
समागमेनाऽपि रतिर्न मां प्रति ।  
परस्परप्रीतिनिराशयोर्वर्म्  
शरीरनाशोऽपि समानुरागयोः ॥

(65) वेत्रवति, मद्रचनादमात्यमार्यपिशुनं ब्रूहि  
चिरप्रबोधनान्न सम्भावितमस्माभिरद्वा  
धर्मासनमध्यासितुम् । यत्प्रत्यवेक्षितं पौरकार्यमायेण तत्पत्र-  
मारोप्य दीयतामिति ॥

(66) अशरणशारणप्रसोदभूतैर्वनतस्मिः क्रियमाणचारुकर्म  
हृदयमिव दुरात्मनां अगुस्म् नवमिव राज्यमनिर्जितोप  
भोग्यम् ॥

(67) त्वमात्मनस्तुल्यमसुं वृणीष्व रत्नं  
समागच्छतु काञ्चनेन ॥

(68) व्याकीर्ण मन्दबुद्धीनां जायते मतिविभ्रमः ।  
तस्यार्थस्तप्तदैरेव संक्षिय क्रियतेऽज्जसा ॥

(69) दत्ता मित्रा च सेनेति वेश्यानामानि कारयेत् ।

(70) अवस्थानुकृतिर्नाम्य रूपं दृश्यतयोच्यते ।

(71) रसः स एव स्वाद्यत्वाद्विसिकस्यैव वर्तनात्  
नानुकार्यस्य वृत्तत्वात् काव्यस्यातत्परत्वतः ॥

(72) क्रीडतां मृष्मैयैद्वद्बालानां द्विरदादिभिः  
स्वोत्साहः स्वदते तद्वत् श्रोतृणामर्जुनादिभिः ॥

(73) नानाभाव-अभिनय-व्यंजितान् वाग्गंगसत्वोपेतान्  
स्थायिमावान् आस्वाद्यन्ति सुमनसः प्रेक्षकाः

(74) अव्यग्रैरिन्द्रियैः शुद्धः उहापोहविशारदः  
व्यक्तदोषोअनुरागी च स नाटये प्रेक्षकः स्मृतः  
यस्तुष्टे तुष्टिमायाति शोके शोकमुपैति च  
दैन्ये दीनत्वमामोते स नाटये प्रेक्षकः स्मृतः  
नवेवेते गुणास्सर्वे एकस्मिन् प्रेक्षकेस्मृताः ।

(75) रम्यं जुगुप्तिमुदारमथापि नीच  
मुग्म प्रसादि गहनं विकृतं च वस्तु ।  
यद्वाप्यवस्तु कविभावकभाव्यमानम्  
तन्नास्ति यन्न रसभावमुपैति लोके ॥

(76) अद्वैतं सुखदुखयोरनुगुणं सर्वास्ववस्थासु यद्  
विश्रामो हृदयस्य यत्र जरसा यस्मिन्नहायों रसः ।  
कालेनावरणात्यात्परिणते यत्स्नेहसारे स्थितम्  
भद्रं प्रेम सुमानुषस्य कथमप्येकं हि तत्प्राप्यते ॥

(77) ये नाम केचिदिह नः प्रथयन्त्यवज्ञाम्  
जानन्ति ते किमपि तान्प्रति नैष यत्नः ।  
उत्पत्स्यते मम तु कोऽपि समानधर्मा  
कालोह्यर्यं निरवधिर्विपुला च पृथ्वी ॥

(78) एषोऽस्मि भोः कविवशात्कार्यवशाच्च  
आयोध्यिकस्तदानीन्तनश्च संवृत्तः ।

(79) तेनेदमुद्भुतजग—त्रयमन्युमूलं अस्तोकवीर  
गुरुसाहसमभ्दुतं च ।  
वीराभ्दुतप्रणयता रघुनन्दनस्य धर्मद्वुहो  
दमयितु श्चरितं निबद्धम् ॥

(80) एतद्वेशासवज्ञोरपतनं शश्वन्मोत्पश्यतः ।  
क्रोधस्य ज्वलितुं ज्ञातिल्यवसरश्चापेन शापेन वा ॥

(81) शिशुर्वा शिष्या वा यदसि मम तत्त्विष्ठु तथा ।  
विशुद्धेष्वकृष्टस्त्वयि तु मम भक्तिं द्रष्टयति ॥  
शिशुत्वं स्त्रैणं वा भवतु ननु वन्द्यासि जगताम् ।  
गुणाः पूजास्यानं गुणिषु न च लिङ्गं न च वयः ॥

(82) भगवति तमसे एतेन अपत्यसंस्मरणेन  
उश्छ्वसितप्रस्तुतसृती ।  
इदानीं वत्सयोः पितुः संनिधानेन क्षणमात्रं  
संसारिणी संवृत्ताऽस्मि

(83) नमः सुकृतपुण्यजनदर्शीनीयाभ्यां  
आर्यपुत्रचरणकमलाभ्याम् ।

(84) वैगुण्योद्दत्तमत्र लोकचरितं नानारसं दृश्यते ।

(85) तामेनां परिभावयन्त्वभिनैर्वन्यस्तरूपां बुधाः ।  
शब्दब्रह्मविदः कवेः परिणां प्राजस्य वाणीमिमाम् ॥

(86) कृतापराधोऽस्मि भगवति त्वया अनुकम्पयितव्यो रामः  
प्रणमति ।

(87) अहो सकलकविसार्थसाधारणी खलु इयं वाल्मीकीया  
सुभाषितानीवी ।

(88) परुषाः संस्कृतगुम्फाः प्राकृतगुम्फोऽपि  
भवति सुकुमारः ।  
पुरुषमहिलानां यावत् इह अन्तरं तेषु तावत्

## I N D E X

Abhiṣekanāṭaka, 92, 94, 97, 98, 101, 102, 191.  
 Acyuta, 137  
 Agastya, 28  
 Ānandavardhan, 6  
 Anargha-Rāghava, 192–6  
 Arabhati, 23, 39, 136  
 Āndhras, 106  
 Apsaras, 129  
 Ariel, 155  
 Aristophanes, 48  
 Arthaśāstra, 27  
 Āryaka, 126  
 Āryans, 26, 27  
 Āśoka, 41, 42, 160  
 Āstika-Parvāta, 7  
 Āśvaghoṣa, 12, 93  
 Ātharvaṇa, 19, 31, 33  
 Avimāraka, 63, 68, 97, 98, 100  
 Ayodhyā, 39, 173, 194  
 Bālabhārata, 196, 197  
 Bālacakrita, 93, 95, 98, 101, 102, 191  
 Bāṇa, 90, 155  
 Bhārati, 21, 23, 24, 39, 136  
 Bhāṣa, 45, 63, 64, 68, 72, 78, 95, 96, 106, 128, 140, 200, 205–212  
 Bhaṭṭa-Narayan, 44, 62, 91  
 Bhavabhbūti, 13, 16, 39, 44, 58, 61, 70, 72, 78, 91, 167–190, 193, 194  
 Brahaspati, 99  
 Brahma, 18, 19, 20, 21, 33, 129  
 Brāhmaṇas, 2, 4, 9, 16  
 Buddhacarita, 14  
 Buddhism, 120, 156, 159, 162  
 Cāṇakya, 37, 80, 83, 166, 167, 172, 173, 174  
 Chandragupta II, 37  
 Carlyle, 102  
 Cārudatta, 63, 64, 205–208  
 Christ, 32  
 Danḍaka, 56, 168, 172  
 Daśarūpaka, 13, 16, 51, 58, 63, 73, 78, 84, 87, 88, 89, 133, 141, 152  
 Dasyus, 28  
 Dhanañjaya, 13, 133, 141  
 Dhanika, 134, 164  
 Diṇnāga, 193, 194  
 Dravidiān Litrératurē, 159  
 Dūta-Ghaṭotkaca, 93, 95, 104  
 Dūtāngadā, 196  
 Dūtavākyā, 93, 100, 101, 104  
 Dūrvāsas, 55  
 Edict, 41  
 England, 32  
 Euripides, 44  
 Frogs, 49  
 Ganapati Shastri, Mahamahopadhyaya, 90, 92  
 George Sāntāyana, 116  
 Girnar Rock, 41  
 Greeks, 30, 44, 49, 51, 52, 71  
 Gupta Empire, 121

Hamlet, 116  
 Harṣa Carita, 156  
 Harṣa Śri, 41, 61, 69, 70, 78, 121, 155–164  
 Hinduism, 104, 156  
 Indra, 129, 164  
 Jainism, 158  
 Jambudvīpa, 18  
 Jānakīharanya, 12  
 Janamejaya, 36  
 Jayadeva, 44, 194  
 Kaisikī, 24, 25, 41  
 Kaiṭabha, 23, 26, 33, 119  
 Kālidāsa, 13, 43, 48, 53, 54, 57, 63, 65, 66, 72, 78, 80, 90, 91, 95, 106–118, 121, 122, 127, 128, 140, 155, 157, 159, 162, 166, 173, 175, 192, 193, 200, 204  
 Kaliṅga, 160  
 Karṇabhāra, 93, 95, 99, 104  
 Karpūramāñjari, 197, 202  
 Kauṭilya, 27  
 Kauśambi, 156  
 Keith, Dr. A. B., 30, 35, 142  
 Kṛṣṇa, 21, 31, 35, 93  
 Kṛṣṇamīśra-Yati, 199  
 Kulasekhara varma bhūpāla, 196, 202, 203  
 Kumāradāsa, 12  
 Kundamālā, 193–5  
 Kurukṣetra, 28  
 Kusīlava, 7, 37, 38, 47  
 Latin, 32  
 Literature, 1  
 Lomaharṣaṇa, 7  
 Madhu, 21, 31, 137  
 Madhusūdan, 195  
 Madhyamavyāyoga, 93, 95, 97, 98  
 Magadha, 7, 8  
 Mahābhārata, 3, 4, 10, 13, 14, 35, 36, 37, 38, 53, 93, 94, 104, 166, 167, 172, 174, 191, 202  
 Māhāvīracarita, 44, 166, 172  
 Maheśvara-yoga, 99  
 Mālati-Mādhava, 38, 44, 57–59, 70, 81, 165–172  
 Mālavikāgnimitra, 41, 54, 55, 57, 59, 66, 69, 70, 72, 76, 90, 95, 107–114, 127, 157, 162  
 Manu, 27, 99  
 Mauryan Empire, 8, 120  
 Medhāpati, 99  
 Mimānsā, 2, 199  
 Mṛchhakaṭika, 38, 44, 47, 60, 64, 65, 78–79, 83, 119–127, 128, 140, 205–208  
 Mudrā-Rākṣasa, 37, 47, 48, 60, 76, 78, 79, 83, 165, 166, 172, 173  
 Murāri, 194–6  
 Nāgānand, 61, 159–164  
 Nahuṣa, 26, 27, 28, 33, 42  
 Naimiṣa, 7  
 Nārada, 19  
 Nāṭyashāstra, 73, 77, 78, 81, 86, 87, 142–147  
 Nirukta, 2, 9  
 Pañcarātra, 92, 99, 100, 102, 103  
 Pañcavaṭi, 56, 172, 189  
 Pāṇini, 90, 91, 93, 94  
 Paraśurāma, 194–195  
 Paurāṇika, 36  
 Piyadāsi, 41

Poet, 1  
 Prabodha-Candrodaya, 198, 199  
 Prācetasa, 99  
 Prākṛt, 14, 15, 109, 119  
 Prasanna-Rāghava, 42, 192, 194, 195  
 Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyaṇa, 63, 73, 92, 99, 102  
 Pratimā, 92-103, 191, 195, 200  
 Priyadarśika, 159-164  
 Prospero, 155  
 Punjab, 28

Rg. 19, 21, 22, 26, 31  
 Rājaśekhara, 90, 203  
 Rajputānē, 42  
 Rāmāyaṇa, 3, 4, 10, 13, 37, 38, 44, 92, 94, 166, 174, 191, 192, 193, 194  
 Ratnāvalī, 41, 47, 61, 70, 159-164

Sāhitya-Darpaṇa, 16, 45, 51, 58, 64, 133, 139  
 Sākuntalam, Abhijñāna, 43, 48, 54, 55, 66, 67, 80, 90, 105, 107-118, 121, 123, 127, 140, 151, 157, 159  
 Sāma, 19, 31  
 Saṅkara, 201  
 Sattvati, 22, 23, 24, 39  
 Sauti, *see* Sūta.  
 Scythians, 106  
 Shakespeare, 27, 104  
 Śiva, 20, 130, 168  
 Subhadrā-Dhanañjaya, 196  
 Subhaṭa, 196, 202  
 Sudraka, 16, 44, 60, 91, 119-127, 140, 166, 205, 207

Sūta, 6, 7, 8, 36, 37, 39, 43, 50  
 Sūtra, 2, 4  
 Svapnavāsavadattā, 52, 63-71, 75, 77, 92, 97-105

Taṇḍu, 130, 131  
 Tilottamā, 193  
 Trivendrum Sanskrit Series, 90, 91, 205

Ujjain, 42, 44  
 Upaniṣads, 2, 4, 9, 13, 16, 90  
 Uttararāmacarita, 38, 44, 55, 56, 57, 82, 83, 165 ff  
 Urubhaṅga, 92-5, 104, 140

Vaidarbhi, 194  
 Vaiśampāyana, 10  
 Vaśiṣṭa, 145, 146  
 Vāli, 194  
 Vālmīki, 7, 38, 56, 191-192, 194, 197  
 Vedāngas, 2  
 Vedic Hymns, 1, 2, 9, 13  
 Veni-Saṁhāra, 44, 48, 62  
 Vikramorvaśiyam, 53, 55, 63, 66, 107, 108, 111, 116, 140  
 Vindhyas, 28  
 Viparītarati, 194  
 Viśākhadatta, 60, 91, 165-172  
 Viṣṇu, 93  
 Viśvanātha, 16, 45, 58, 92, 133  
 Vyāsa, 7, 14, 197

Yajurveda, 9, 19, 22, 31  
 Yama, 174  
 Yāska, 9









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